

More Than Atonement:
Anabaptist-Mennonite Discipleship Ecclesiology and the Work of Christ
by
Isaiah Ritzmann

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
and Conrad Grebel University College
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Theological Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2015

© Isaiah Ritzmann 2015

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on seven authors writing in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition who have made the argument that traditional atonement theologies have not only failed to adequately integrate the church and the kingdom with the atonement but the very articulations of the atonement logically exclude and marginalize these important themes. Traditional accounts of the atonement have failed to adequately integrate the church as a community of disciples or Christ's work of bringing the kingdom. In light of this failure these authors propose models of the atonement that promise an adequate integration of atonement, church and kingdom.

These authors focus on the wider work of Christ, seen as bringing the kingdom and forming the church as a community of disciples. While having a consensus around these themes their thinking on traditional atonement themes (such as sin, guilt and punishment) is remarkably variegated with little discernable unity. This thesis concludes by suggesting that if Anabaptist-Mennonite theologians make the distinction between the ultimate work of Christ (i.e., bringing the kingdom and forming the church) and his penultimate work (i.e., of atoning for sins) this would bring greater coherence to these traditional atonement themes which in turn would help deliver on the promise for a more adequate integration of atonement, church and kingdom.

In the first chapter this thesis gives an account of Anabaptist-Mennonite discipleship ecclesiology through two representative authors, Harold Bender and

John Howard Yoder. The next three chapters take a closer look at atonement theologies of seven representative Anabaptist-Mennonite authors, both their general proposals but also how they integrate atonement and discipleship ecclesiology. The concluding chapter will draw the analysis together indicating what has been learned about both atonement and discipleship ecclesiology within this tradition, and how they relate to each other.

Acknowledgements

When the author of Ecclesiastes mused “of the writing of books there is no end” he probably made the mistake of putting “books” in plural. My experience of writing this one thesis makes it seem like of the writing of one book there is no end. I am grateful for all those who were with me on this journey that seemed to go on and on. First of all thanks to my advisor, Jeremy Bergen, who helped immensely in helping me focus both on a theme within the atonement literature and on the authors I choose. He also helped in my writing, helping me take my broad, sweeping, generalizing statements into concise, meaningful and understandable arguments. I think I have become a better writer and a better theological thinker under his advisement. Second I want to thank Max Kennel and Alex Suderman, both of whom read these chapters I was working on and gave me the encouragement that my lack of weekends this past year was well worth the effort. Thanks also to Ann McInnis who helped edit my work, correcting my citations and a myriad of other small but important errors.

Finally I want to thank those in my life who have introduced me to living the life of discipleship in community that this thesis, somewhat abstractly, extols. First of all I want to extend thanks to my family who were the first to invite me to follow Jesus and whose (many) stories of conscientious objection as radical discipleship formed me from an early age. Second of all a lot of gratitude goes to those with whom I shared five years of life in intentional Christian community in Kitchener Ontario ,

particularly Matthew Brnjas and Aaron Scheerer. I began researching for this thesis the month after we moved out and for the last year and a half every time I write sentences like “Christ came to bring us together as communities who radically follow him” I think of our time together.

*I dedicate this thesis to everyone I lived with in Intentional Community,
particularly Matt and Aaron.*

Thank you for the rich lived experience of what I write about here.

Contents

Abstract iii

Acknowledgements v

Introduction 1

1 Anabaptist-Mennonite Discipleship Ecclesiology 5

2 Anabaptist-Mennonite Atonement Theologies 30

3 Atonement and Discipleship Ecclesiology 66

4 Anabaptist-Mennonite Atonement Grammars 96

5 Conclusion 129

Bibliography 144

Introduction

“No other hope, no other plea;
he took my place, and died for me.”

- Eliza E. Hewitt

“Oh the glory when he took our place..”

- Sufjan Stevens

There is a good collection of songs sung in Christian worship that extol Christ's role in “taking our place” on the cross. Whether the specifics of this action are explained or not there is a general understanding that Christ's cross was *in lieu* of others experiencing the same thing. It was a substitution. Yet this logic is beginning to be questioned particularly among Mennonites who understand discipleship and the church community as part of the essence of Christianity. If Christ's disciples are to take up their crosses (as Jesus commands in the gospels) and follow him, what does this mean for how Jesus' own cross is understood? Or, in other words, what is our place if he took our place? This thesis argues that the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has identified that the community of disciples must be seen as integral and not incidental to Christ's work and has sought to articulate atonement models that respect this integrity.

This thesis will to explore the connections between an Anabaptist-Mennonite discipleship ecclesiology and atonement theology. It starts by looking at this discipleship ecclesiology as it stood in the mid-twentieth century. It does this by paying extensive attention to the writings of both Harold Bender, the church administrator and historian, and his protégé John Howard Yoder. Although there were others writing at the time on this subject these authors were chosen as

representative, both because of the breadth of their writing and because of their subsequent influence on the tradition. I will show larger patterns within their discipleship ecclesiologies, how Bender and Yoder differ from each other particularly with the latter's political reframing of Christology, and how they both relate discipleship ecclesiology to the work of Christ.

The next three chapters will look at seven authors who were affected by the Anabaptist revival of the mid-twentieth century (represented and shaped by Bender and Yoder) and who wrote about the atonement. How do they make the connections between discipleship ecclesiology and the work of Christ? The second chapter will give a broad overview of their proposals, the third chapter make connections between their proposals and their discipleship ecclesiologies and the fourth will explore what these authors say can be said about the atonement. The authors explored here include John Driver, C. Norman Kraus, Thomas Finger, J. Denny Weaver, Mark Baker and Joel B. Green (who, for all intents and purposes, will be treated together in this thesis), Darrin W. Snyder Belousek and Rachel Reesor-Taylor. All these were not the only authors in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition writing about the atonement but they have been chosen as representative both for the breadth of their work and, in some cases, their originality and influence. Not all of them write atonement theologies *per se* but all of them engage with the questions that will be the focus here. Other authors, such as Gordon Kauffman, Ted Grimsrud, Greg Boyd and William McClendon were considered but were not included for the sake of brevity and focus.

This thesis pays attention to the dichotomy that many of these authors are trying to overcome through their theologies. They seek to go beyond the binary between Christ “saving us” (as in unilateral divine action) and “us participating” in Christ (without a clear understanding of how this relates to the saving). One crucial way these authors deconstruct this binary is through the introduction of kingdom language. In a variety of ways these authors insist that, whatever role it plays, Christ’s main work was not in bringing atonement. Rather his main work was in bringing the kingdom. This in turn makes more sense of the participatory element so clear in the New Testament and within Anabaptist history.

Yet is bringing the kingdom incomplete? This thesis discovers that although there is an emerging consensus among these authors that the main work of Christ was bringing the kingdom, and that this work was political, nonviolent and participatory in nature, there is less of a consensus around traditional atonement themes such as the realities of evil, sin, forgiveness, powers and final judgment. There is an interesting and incredible variety of ways of articulating these themes, some fairly new to Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. These include the existence and nature of the powers, the distinction between guilt and punishment, the reality of shame and the relation of retribution to sin. From these various themes real and significant questions have arisen for which the tradition as a whole has not arrived at a consensus. Is punishment for sin/retribution legitimate for God and is it on occasion necessary? How do the powers (which are beyond human control) relate to sin (as a failure of personal responsibility)? What is the role of shame in salvation from sin? Was Christ’s death atoning for sin?

These authors all insist that Christ's work is saving and that he did what no one else could do in changing reality in some way. They all also insist that this work did not exclude the participation of the community of Christ's followers. Somehow, in some way, the community and its members are not only beneficiaries of Christ's work but are integral participants in it. In this sense it is improper to say "Christ took our place." What this means is what the next five chapters sets out to explore.

Chapter 1

Anabaptist-Mennonite Discipleship Ecclesiology

The renaissance of Anabaptist studies during the mid-twentieth century helped to produce fresh theological articulations among Mennonites. One of the most significant of these fresh articulations is the ecclesiology that emphasized that the church was intended to be a community of disciples. This discipleship ecclesiology found its bold articulators in Harold Bender, church leader and historian, and his protégé John Howard Yoder. The two produced many relevant texts on the subject through a myriad of published articles and books from the mid-1940s through to the early 1970s. In order to better understand the prominence of discipleship ecclesiology in later Mennonite theology it would be helpful to understand how it was expressed by both Bender and Yoder.

This chapter will begin by looking at the work of Harold Bender and how he articulated this discipleship ecclesiology in a series of articles published in the 1940s and 1950s. The chapter will then proceed to review discipleship ecclesiology as it was conveyed in different books and articles published by John Howard Yoder from the mid-1950s through to the early 1970s. Although there were others who wrote in this tradition at this time, these two authors have been chosen as representative, partially for their acknowledged influence but also because of the breadth of their own writing.

Harold Bender's Discipleship Ecclesiology

This section seeks to trace Bender's development of this theme in *The Anabaptist Vision* and later articles published over the succeeding twenty years. It will focus on constituent elements including his understanding of discipleship as Christianity's essence, church community as corollary to discipleship, the importance of the work of Christ and the relationship between church and world. In doing so it will set the stage to review both John Howard Yoder's discipleship ecclesiology and that of the atonement authors explored in later chapters.

In *The Anabaptist Vision* Bender notes three "major points of emphasis" for Anabaptism the first of which was "a new conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship."¹ For Bender discipleship meant "the transformation of the entire way of life... so that it should be fashioned after the teaching and example of Christ."² Keim points out that, despite the new language of discipleship, Bender seems to have in mind what he had described in earlier texts as "holiness of life." Thus what Bender is imagining here is likely quite conventional, something which might be the same as what the Mennonite Church had meant in the early twentieth century and had "not moved much beyond the prevailing formulations found in Daniel Kauffman's *Bible Doctrines*" including living a life marked by the required "restrictions."³

Yet, once again, the language and how it was being related to other formulations was novel. Besides using the language of "discipleship" and saying that

¹ Harold Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1944), 20.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

³ Albert N. Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 324.

for Anabaptists discipleship was seen as the “essence of Christianity” Bender also creatively compares this to other Christian traditions. He asks whether Christianity is “primarily a matter of reception of divine grace through a sacramental-sacerdotal institution” as in Catholicism or is “chiefly enjoyment of the inner experience of grace through faith in Christ” as in Lutheranism or is “most of all the transformation of life through discipleship” as in Anabaptism?⁴

Bender begins his essay “The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship”⁵ by explaining that for a time he thought the central controlling or regulative idea of Anabaptism was their understanding of the church.⁶ Yet in a similar way to *The Anabaptist Vision*, where he argued that religious freedom was a formal concept, so here he states that for Anabaptism the church is also a formal, derivative idea. Bender argues that, instead, discipleship is the core idea.⁷

Christian discipleship, for Bender, is different from the other kinds of discipleship that existed during the time of Jesus. It was unlike studying the law under a rabbi or being a pupil of a Greek philosopher.⁸ Whereas for these disciples there would be an attachment to the teaching or tradition of the master, for Jesus’ disciples there was an attachment first and foremost “to his person, radically and completely.”⁹ These disciples, attached as they are to the person rather than simply the teaching of Christ, are also made differently. They are “made by witnessing, not

⁴ Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*, 33.

⁵ Harold Bender, “The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24 (1950): 25-32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸ Harold Bender, *These Are My People* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1960), 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*

by teaching” since the required response of a person to Jesus is to “accept him personally as Saviour and Lord.”¹⁰

Bender notes that discipleship was also not merely a matter of following the teaching or person of Christ, but was to be a transformation of life. It was about “new life wrought by God’s regenerating grace.”¹¹ A phrase Anabaptists used often to refer to discipleship was “walking in the resurrection.” For them “this new resurrection life [was] one in which the Holy Spirit works with power [for] continuous growth to perfection.”¹² The life of discipleship was not a life of exerted moral effort or of legalistically following the rules but was rather one where the Spirit’s power unites with the human will to “produce a life of holiness.”¹³ Bender does not mince words about the fact that “the powerful dynamic for holy living and discipleship” was the direct result of regeneration and the empowering presence of the Spirit without which, he implies, discipleship would make no sense.¹⁴ Whereas “Luther emphasized the status of forgiveness,” Anabaptists understood the point of grace as “regeneration following forgiveness . . . understood as vital change . . . producing newness of life.”¹⁵

Finally Bender indicates something within the nature of discipleship that is open to contextualization in different times and places. He writes that for the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century discipleship “meant far more than [they]

¹⁰ Ibid., 78.

¹¹ Harold Bender, “‘Walking in the Resurrection’: The Anabaptist Doctrine of Regeneration and Discipleship,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35 (1961): 96.

¹² Ibid., 96.

¹³ Ibid., 97.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 103.

realized or were able to work out.” This developmental essence was not merely a 16th century phenomenon but went all the way back to the disciples of Jesus themselves. Jesus’ earliest disciples “proclaimed and exemplified great principles of life *without developing* systematic and programmatic formulae for their application.”¹⁶ He gives the examples of slavery and warfare which were neither forbidden nor condemned by Jesus or Paul but which inevitably were by the development of the principles of discipleship. Such development, Bender suggests, would continue today if discipleship was put into practice.

Thus, in these texts Bender makes several important contributions to the discipleship element of a discipleship ecclesiology. First, and most significantly, he introduces not only the language of discipleship but articulates its centrality. He argues that for Anabaptists discipleship was the essence of Christianity and, for Anabaptism in particular, it was the central, regulative idea. It meant “transformation of the entire way of life” modelled after Christ and differed radically from both Protestantism and Catholicism in what it considered the “primary matter” of Christianity. It was regeneration: grace changing a person’s way of life rather than conferring status. Yet, as Keim noted, Bender probably did not differ too greatly from Daniel Kauffman in what he imagined discipleship to look like. This rather traditional view can be seen in how Bender connected making disciples to witnessing and accepting Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Yet there was something dynamic in Bender’s conception of discipleship which had the potential to grow in

¹⁶ Bender, “Theology of Discipleship,” 31-32.

unexpected and powerful ways as exemplified by Bender in the rejection of slavery and warfare.

When Bender wrote about the church element of discipleship ecclesiology he made it clear that, as was mentioned above, the church was not the central idea but derivative from the more core idea of discipleship. This new concept of church was “created” by the central principle of discipleship which “was the absolutely essential heart.”¹⁷ If discipleship was living the transformed life, then the church community was the social expression of this transformation.

Just as Bender compares the Anabaptist understanding of discipleship to other Christian traditions, he does the same with their understanding of the church. Over and against an understanding of church as institution, instrument for proclamation, or resource group for piety, Bender argued that for Anabaptism the church was “a brotherhood of love in which the fullness of the Christian life ideal was expressed.”¹⁸ Bender stresses that this brotherhood ideal was not simply “the expression of pious sentiments” but “the actual practice of sharing possessions to meet the needs of others.”¹⁹ In *The Anabaptist Vision* Bender speaks highly of the Hutterites and their common treasury as a powerful expression of the brotherhood-of-love concept of church.²⁰

In the mid-1940s Harold Bender presented a paper at a meeting of the Mennonite Community Association entitled “The Mennonite Conception of the

¹⁷ Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*, 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

Church and Its Relation to Community Building.”²¹ The occasion gave him an important chance to explicate his ecclesiology in relation to community. He begins this essay by suggesting that the words “church” and “community” are in fact interchangeable.²² For the church is “a brotherhood of love” where members meet all of each other’s needs, spiritual and material.²³ Bender once again contrasts Anabaptism to other Christian traditions in this conception of church arguing that “the great state churches and denominations of ancient and modern times were not and are not brotherhoods but great institutional machines operated by and controlled by a professional class . . . in which there is accordingly no true common life.”²⁴

One aspect of this “brotherhood of love” is church discipline. Bender writes that he hesitates to use the word given the history of unfair, legalistic discipline. Yet when discipline is used wisely it can be a “tremendous source of strength for the individual and, in turn, the entire body.”²⁵ The church as a disciplinary/restorative body is thus an asset for an individual’s discipleship and not merely incidental to it. Bender implies that church discipline is the moral equivalent to economic sharing within the brotherhood. This disciplinary aspect of the church will appear in the ecclesiologies of the authors explored later in this thesis, some of whom will connect it to the work of Christ.

²¹ Harold Bender, “The Mennonite Conception of the Church and Its Relation to Community Building,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 19 (1945): 90-100.

²² *Ibid.*, 90.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

In his "Theology of Discipleship," Bender relates establishing true church order to the cost of discipleship. He begins by critiquing the work of Thomas à Kempis who, according to Bender, is "concerned primarily with the inner world of the soul" such that "the social dimension is lacking."²⁶ What is particularly absent is a "criticism of the total social and cultural order" which is necessary for "the establishment of a full Christian order in the brotherhood of the church."²⁷ For Bender, Kempis misses the "real cross-bearing experience of true discipleship" in his refusal of conflict with the world and avoidance of the creative work of "establishing the true church."²⁸ In other words, what taking up the cross means first and foremost is taking the risk to establish the true church in a hostile world. For the church, discipleship means "a church composed *only* of disciples."²⁹

In a way that might sound shocking to contemporaries, Bender also relates the establishment of the church to the people of Israel. He begins by arguing that the church is indeed the people of God.³⁰ There has always been one people of God based on faith, not two peoples of God, one based on faith and the other on descent. Race "no longer counts, if indeed it ever did."³¹ Israel as an ethnic group continues but it is "outside of God's plan."³² More radically, making "room for the

²⁶ Bender, "Theology of Discipleship," 30.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁰ Bender, *These Are My People*, 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

new creation” required by necessity the “historical rejection and elimination of national and ethnic Israel from the plan of God.”³³

Despite this rapturous discontinuity there is nevertheless continuity with the people of God in the Old Testament. Primarily this means that the church “is a company of concrete living persons in the flesh, living in time and space, though no longer bound to one geographic area.”³⁴ Thus the church is a visible not an invisible, mystic reality. This is contrast to the ecclesiology of the Protestant Reformers who inappropriately tried to maintain the “mass church” of the medieval ages which was ultimately inconsistent with their reformed doctrine.³⁵

Finally, as he did with discipleship, Bender connects his understanding of the church to his understanding of the Holy Spirit. He argues, perhaps provocatively, that the Spirit’s work in the church “is dependent upon human instrument and channels.”³⁶ In other words, the Spirit’s work in the church is dependent on the people of the church. The Spirit works mediately not directly. For Bender, if “these channels” are “nonexistent, choked, or cut off” the work of Holy Spirit stops. The Spirit “cannot work if the community does not exist.”³⁷

Thus in these texts Bender makes several important contributions to the church element of a discipleship ecclesiology. First of all the church is seen as corollary of the more central element of discipleship. It is because discipleship means a transformation of all of life after Christ that the church can be understood

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 14.

³⁵ Ibid., 20.

³⁶ Ibid., 56.

³⁷ Ibid., 57.

as a community or a “brotherhood of love.” This community is known for how it supports each member, including sharing material possessions and keeping each other accountable in restorative discipline. In continuity with the Old Testament people of God, this community is a visible fellowship of concrete persons as opposed to an invisible church. All of this is supported by the work of the Spirit who, without the church, would have no channel in which to work.

In some of his writings on discipleship ecclesiology, Bender connects discipleship ecclesiology to the work of Christ in a fascinating way. Initially he is quite traditional in his understanding of the work of Christ, arguing that it is a prerequisite to the community of disciples. It is so in the sense that it logically precedes the creation of the church and the faithful formation of disciples. Yet he also cautions that a classically protestant understanding of the work of Christ can actually hinder rather than aid the establishment of a community of disciples.

He introduces his “Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship” essay by noting that discipleship begins when one answers the question: “What think ye of Christ?”³⁸ He indicates a whole host of answers to that question that are inadequate for discipleship. These include thinking of Christ as prophet or moral teacher³⁹ or as (presumably, exclusively) an object of worship.⁴⁰ Of particular danger is to use Christ “exclusively as Saviour.” Bender nuances what he means here. If one had “the true ultimate and comprehensive meaning” of salvation this would not be a problem. However, the problem arises when “Christ becomes *only* the sinbearer”

³⁸ Bender, “Theology of Discipleship,” 27.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 28.

resulting in only forgiveness and justification. This is insufficient.⁴¹ This experience of forgiveness resulting from atonement is “marvelous and wholly necessary.” Yet it is intended by God only to be the first step and foundation for the rest of Christian life, for the rest of discipleship and should not be made into the “whole of Christian experience” nor its “end goal.”⁴² What is needed then is to look at Christ not only as prophet and Saviour but also as Lord. Only this will result in discipleship for the believer.⁴³

Bender’s discipleship ecclesiology also results in a fairly dualistic account of church and world. A consequence of *The Anabaptist Vision* is that the Anabaptist must “withdraw from the worldly system” to create the “Christian social order” within the church. This social order has no hope or chance to grow outside the borders of the church and only individual conversions, of people coming out of the world and into the church, will cause its growth.⁴⁴ For Bender it seemed obvious that this understanding of church would lead one to “withdraw his major energies” from social or political humanitarianism or other forms of “world betterment.” Rather than trying to make the world a better place, rather than attempt “reconstruction of the entire non-Christian world order” the disciple would instead focus on building a better church community.⁴⁵ Thus one who holds to this kind of discipleship ecclesiology could not agree with Catholics, Calvinists, Social Gospellers,

⁴¹ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁴ Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*, 35.

⁴⁵ Bender, “Mennonite Concept of the Church,” 99.

humanitarians or evolutionists who hold the world can be redeemed or gradually transformed as “a whole.”⁴⁶

Thus Bender connects his discipleship ecclesiology both to an understanding of the work of Christ and an understanding of the relationship between church and world. The work of Christ must not be reduced to mere atonement or the procurement of forgiveness. If this reduction happens then discipleship becomes an impossibility. Atonement is needed but it is only one aspect of the total work of Christ, which includes his becoming Lord over our lives. The relationship between church and world also cannot be reduced. They stand diametrically opposed to each other and one who holds to an Anabaptist discipleship ecclesiology will, according to Bender, withdraw from trying to make a better world as a whole and will focus instead on building the church community.

John Howard Yoder’s Discipleship Ecclesiology

Harold Bender’s protégé John Howard Yoder picked up on many of the same themes of a discipleship ecclesiology as did his mentor. As illustrated by the title of his earliest books, Yoder articulates these themes in light of politics.⁴⁷ This review of Yoder’s work will follow a pattern similar to the review of Bender. First, it will look at how Yoder articulated a political Christology. Second, it will review how this Christology led to an understanding of discipleship as political responsibility. Third, it will review his understanding of church as political reality. Then it will probe his

⁴⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁷ Titles such as *Christian Witness to the State, Politics of Jesus, and Discipleship as Political Responsibility*.

understanding of nonviolence/servanthood as a meaningful social stance. Finally this review will look at how Yoder reconceived the relationship between church and world in light of, or perhaps shining light on, his politicized discipleship ecclesiology. The difficulty of taking Yoder's discipleship ecclesiology apart like this, by dividing it into constituent elements, is that his work functions in a way that one part radically implies all the others. Thus reviewing his work will in some ways seem repetitive. A better way to think of it is as accretive. The interrelated elements will make the most sense afterwards, once they are seen not only *in-themselves* but also *in-relation*.

In *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*⁴⁸ Yoder argues that, given that Jesus is God's revelation, Jesus' political existence must be understood, as God's normative command on how to be in the political realm.⁴⁹ He expands this to say that since Jesus was a political person his cross must also be understood politically.⁵⁰ For Jesus the cross was "not some unexplainable or undeserved evil that came upon him accidentally, like a disease, a storm or an earthquake." Instead it was a form of suffering Jesus could have avoided. So then the cross of Christ "was the cost of obedience in the midst of a rebellious world."⁵¹ It was political faithfulness, not unforeseen accident or unavoidable suffering, that led Christ to the cross.

⁴⁸ John Howard Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003). Originally published 1964.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

What exactly was the nature of this cross-shaped political faithfulness of Christ? Primarily it was the “political alternative to both insurrection and quietism.”⁵² He was not rejecting politics for an otherworldly spirituality but establishing servanthood as an alternative politics.⁵³ Jesus was not a moral teacher whose ethics had political ramification but was “the bearer of a new possibility of human, social and therefore political relationships.”⁵⁴ The cross thus has “concrete social meaning” for both “enmity and power.”⁵⁵

This ethical meaning of the cross is often dismissed for dogmatic reasons when people argue that since Jesus “had to die” his final acts have no normative political meaning. Jesus “pushing aside the crown” is not an example to follow for he did this *only* in order to pay the price of salvation or to accomplish atonement.⁵⁶ This, Yoder suggests, is a form of docetism where the true humanity of Christ is pushed aside and denied.⁵⁷ Yoder later lists this focus on the atonement as one of the six ways Christians avoid the normative ethic of Jesus.⁵⁸ Importantly, in a way similar to Bender, he does not deny the atonement or related theological beliefs. None of these, he says, “is being rejected.” Rather Yoder sees himself as defending what he calls the “messianic element” or the normativity of Jesus’ political stance. He is not saying Jesus was not a sacrifice; he is only defending against those who say

⁵² John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

that because Jesus was a sacrifice “he may not be seen as sovereign.”⁵⁹ For Yoder the disjunction between the dogmatic and political Christ “must be laid to the account of the traditional view, not mine.”⁶⁰

Yoder’s argument about the political normativity of Christ naturally leads into framing discipleship as “political responsibility.” He begins his book by the same name in arguing that “following Jesus” is the proper Christian response to evil in the world.⁶¹ Discipleship is what it means for Christians to be politically responsible. In fact, just as the cross of disciples has “not meaning without Jesus [so also] without the cross of the church, the cross of Christ would be emptied.”⁶² His cross has no meaning outside of the cross of his disciples. This makes sense if one follows Yoder’s understanding of the work of Christ where Jesus is “the bearer of a new possibility of human, social and, therefore, political relationships.” If this is the meaning of the cross, then only when the cross finds expression in the life of his disciples does this possibility become an actuality.

Cross-shaped political discipleship has several concrete ends. First it means a renunciation of “the quest to have dominion over the course of events.”⁶³ This includes coercing others “in order to move history aright.”⁶⁴ It also means that both “nationalism and pragmatism” are abandoned as they are not reflective of “love in

⁵⁹ Ibid., 226.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 21.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ John Howard Yoder, “Christ Hope of the World,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 203. Originally published 1966.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the way of the cross and in the power of the resurrection.”⁶⁵ For Yoder the call of discipleship is a call to embody the servanthood of Jesus. Yoder is at pains to point out that servanthood and nonresistance are “not a matter of legalism.” It is not a restriction, not a “thou shalt not” but a call to be in the world as Christ was in the world.⁶⁶ Servanthood is not “withdrawal from society.” Servanthood is, instead, “an active missionary presence within society, a source of healing and creativity.”⁶⁷

In a way similar to Bender insisting on the linkages between regeneration and discipleship, Yoder too links discipleship to the work of the Holy Spirit and other “resources.” Christians are only able to be disciples because they both receive “forgiveness” and can depend on the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸ Discipleship, based as it is on the Holy Spirit and other particularly Christian experiences, means that “Christian ethics are for Christians.”⁶⁹ Yoder says if one asks whether non-Christians should love, forgive and generally act like disciples, one asks a “speculative question.” Non-Christians simply do not have “the spiritual resources for making such redeemed behaviour a real possibility.”⁷⁰ This both empowers Christians for radical, cross-shaped discipleship but also is the reason for insisting that the church should be the church and should not be confused or muddled with the world. To collapse the distinction between church and world would be to forget

⁶⁵ John Howard Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 149. Originally published 1954.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁷ Yoder, “Christ Hope of the World,” 217.

⁶⁸ Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 41.

⁶⁹ John Howard Yoder, *Christian Witness to the State* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002), 29. Originally published 1964.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

these specifically Christian resources which would lead either to “demanding of everyone a level of obedience and selflessness” only meaningful for Christians or otherwise “lowering the requirements of everyone to the level” where specifically Christian resources are not needed.⁷¹

Whereas for Bender the church emerged as a logical consequence of discipleship, this is less clear and, perhaps, even reversed for Yoder. For Yoder the church “is herself a society.”⁷² Biblically speaking, the church is “properly a political entity, a *polis*,” more so than something cultic.⁷³ In other places Yoder writes of the church as constituting a “sociological reality.”⁷⁴ Yoder seems to use every language imaginable to deny that the church’s existence is derivative of a prior and primary individual reality.

Yoder calls the creation of this community, this political and social reality, “the work of God” on several occasions. God’s grace to the individual was the good news for most Protestants from Zinzendorf and Wesley to Bultmann and Graham.⁷⁵ Yet in both Old and New Testaments God’s primary work is the creation of a people.⁷⁶ The church is not the result of personal conversion, instead personal conversion is secondary or derivative from this “new social wholeness.”⁷⁷ The

⁷¹ John Howard Yoder, “Otherness of the Church” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 63. Originally published 1960.

⁷² Yoder, *Christian Witness to the State*, 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁴ John Howard Yoder, “Let the Church Be the Church,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 170.

⁷⁵ John Howard Yoder, “A People in the World” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 73.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

primary purpose of God is not in controlling world history towards some predetermined end nor in relating to individuals but rather in creating this new people.⁷⁸ The creation of this people is not “a fruit of the gospel; it is the good news. It is not merely the agent of mission... this is the mission.”⁷⁹ Salvation itself is “not just fishing souls out of the mass for a privileged destiny”; instead, “salvation is loving human relationships under God.”⁸⁰

Yet it is more than just creating a community of people that is the work of God. It is not just the social reality that is important but that it is “new.” The newness that God creates “is a community of those who serve instead of ruling, who suffer instead of inflicting suffering, whose fellowship crosses social lines instead of reinforcing them.”⁸¹ Thus the community actualizes the new political possibilities of which Jesus was the representative bearer. Since the servanthood they live out is not “legalistic withdrawal” but “active missionary presence” this understanding of church is directly related to the wider world. In fact the church is “the primary social structure through which the gospel works to change other structures.”⁸²

Yoder says as much: “what it means to be the church must be found in a clearer grasp of relation to what is not the church, namely ‘the world.’”⁸³ The church can only be understood, first and foremost, if “the world” is understood.

Theologically, comments Yoder, the world is all in creation “that has taken the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ John Howard Yoder, “Binding and Loosing,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 351.

⁸¹ Yoder, “A People in the World,” 91.

⁸² Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 154.

⁸³ Yoder, “Let the Church Be the Church,” 170.

freedom not yet to believe.” Thus the difference between church and world is neither a metaphysical imposition nor something that “self-righteous Christians have built around themselves.”⁸⁴ The primary distinction is not between church and world but between the overlapping aeons, the old age and the new age. The old age “points backward to human history” outside of Christ whereas the new age “points forward to the fullness of the kingdom.” Each age has a social manifestation: the world is the manifestation of the old and the church is the manifestation of the new.⁸⁵

Even though the world is the social expression of the old age it is less clear that this means it has some concrete, essential identity. In fact, Yoder argues, “The world ‘as such’ has no intrinsic ontological dignity.”⁸⁶ The world and its worlds (“of economics” or “of politics,” etc.) thus do not have “one tangible, definable quality” but are a mixture of both “chaos and kingdom” with each having its own “demonic blend of order and revolt.”⁸⁷ So the world and its various social manifestations are not pure evil, wholly in revolt or totally depraved. Each area in the world conforms to a certain extent to its “creative intent” while nevertheless also exhibiting some forms of fallenness to varying degrees.⁸⁸

This is the theological context for the roles of both state and church. The church’s mandate, to overcome evil, is superior to that of the state, the mandate of which is only to restrain evil. The mandate of the state only has meaning when the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 171.

⁸⁵ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology,” 146.

⁸⁶ Yoder, “Otherness of the Church,” 56.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 55.

church fulfills her mandate.⁸⁹ Yoder states that God intentionally left the state in the hands of pagans because he has “other means, *more effective means*, of working in and for the world.”⁹⁰ God works through the sword in the state and through the cross in the church.⁹¹ Through a variety of means including evangelization, prayer, discipleship and loving service “Christians contribute not less, but far more to human solidarity” than political officials.⁹² Yoder uses an analogy of a musician who gets off stage to fulfill the role of the usher. “Of course the usher is also necessary” Yoder muses, “but the musician cannot be replaced in his or her role . . . if the musician is not on stage, and there is therefore no concert, then the usher’s role has no meaning either.”⁹³ Therefore, Yoder concludes, it is reasonable to speak both of an “order of providence” where Christ rules in-and-through-and-despite human disobedience and an “order of redemption” where Christ rules in-and-through his community of disciples.⁹⁴

From the inner life of the church, from its very existence, come two gifts for the wider world. First of all, “there are lessons for the outside world from the inner life” of the body of believers.⁹⁵ The church’s “very existence” after all “should be a demonstration of what love means in social relations.”⁹⁶ Second, a “comparable creative impulse should radiate from the church’s services to the larger

⁸⁹ Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 23.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31. Emphasis mine.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁹⁴ Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State*, 12.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

community.”⁹⁷ Yoder gives the examples of schools and hospitals which were originally created by the church but when their “utility had been proved” they became institutionalized and generalized in the wider society.

Using these two examples Yoder proposes that the church should view her ministry as “one of constant inventive vision” for the common good. When her experiments, her pilot projects, have been proved, she can move on to “where her creativity is more urgently needed.”⁹⁸ Thus the church, in its discipleship, follows Jesus in both nonresistance and servanthood. This following, once again, is not “legalistic withdrawal” from the world but a “creative missionary presence” within it. In this alternative politics of servanthood the church is far more successful than the state in overcoming evil in the world with good.

For Yoder the work of Christ is primarily in divinely revealing a normative politics, namely in the cross, and in being the bearer of new possibilities in human (and therefore social and political) relationships. These new possibilities and this new politics are embodied in the church as community of disciples. The church as a body of people represent a “new social wholeness” of servanthood and are in the world through a “creative missionary presence.” Without their discipleship, without their cross, Christ’s own cross would be emptied of its significance. The goal of this “creative missionary presence” is to overcome evil. Indeed this is the church’s mandate and why the church, as opposed to the state, is at the centre of history. The church, unlike those in the world, is endowed with the Holy Spirit and other “spiritual resources” and is thus able to conform to this high calling.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 20.

Summary

There are similarities and differences in the discipleship ecclesiologies of both Bender and Yoder. They have similar convictions on the centrality of discipleship, on the essential interrelationship between church and discipleship, on the distinct, almost dualistic, relationship between church and world and on the inadequacy of certain, traditional Christological formulations on their own to provide a necessary foundation for discipleship. Likewise, both speak very highly of the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of disciples and church without which the latter two are inconceivable.

For both Bender and Yoder discipleship entails both transformation and following Jesus. Bender writes that discipleship is “transformation of the entire way of life... so that it should be fashioned after the teaching and example of Christ.”⁹⁹ Yoder adds that this “following Jesus” is also the way Christians deal with evil in the world; it is “political responsibility.” Discipleship is so essential to Christian faith that the church’s cross-bearing and Christ’s cross-bearing are intrinsically, inseparably linked. Political discipleship means not “legalistic withdrawal” but an active missionary presence in society.

For both Bender and Yoder discipleship and church imply each other. For Bender church-as-community is ultimately derivative of the centrality of discipleship. It is a corollary idea. For Yoder the church is the people of God and has a unique, central role in history as the primary work of God and the means God uses

⁹⁹ Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*, 20.

to overcome evil. For Yoder the social novelty of the church is that it is “a community of those who serve instead of ruling, who suffer instead of inflicting suffering, whose fellowship crosses social lines instead of reinforcing them.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, the significance of this body of people is that they are disciples of Christ and conformed to his way of life. Here the church is prior to individual faith and discipleship.

For both Bender and Yoder the church is understood as distinct and separated from the world. For Bender the calling of the church to be a community of disciples means a withdrawal from the world and from attempts at making it a better place as a “whole.”¹⁰¹ Energies should not be wasted on this kind of humanitarian work; instead, the attempt will be made to reform and build the church so that it will reflect a “Christian social order.” Bender distinguishes this view of the relationship between church and world from the conceptions of other Christian traditions. Yoder’s answer, while similar in its dualism, is proposed politically and eschatologically. The church and state have different mandates: the mandate of the state is to restrain evil while the mandate of the church is to overcome evil. The church does not attempt to take over the world or become the world, for this would be analogous to a musician leaving the stage to work as an usher. The church, in its cross-bearing and following of Jesus, acts nonviolently and as a servant. In this role it is more effective than the state in creating good in the world and has a mission of having a “constant inventive vision.” For Bender the

¹⁰⁰ Yoder, “A People in the World,” 91.

¹⁰¹ Bender is speaking about withdrawal theologically, practically he almost certainly imagined this withdrawal differently than, for example, the Old Order Amish.

effort was to make the church better, more faithful in its discipleship rather than make the world better. For Yoder this dichotomy was deconstructed for the inner growth of the community of disciples has as its end the church's mission, its political discipleship.

Bender and Yoder have similar critiques of traditional accounts of the work of Christ based on their accounts of discipleship. Both argue, in slightly different ways, that the work of Christ, and specifically his atoning work, is wholly necessary for Christian belief and practice.¹⁰² Yet both point out that an exclusive focus on the atonement has often been used as an excuse for not following Christ as Lord. Bender says that the best view of Christ for discipleship is to see him as both Saviour and Lord. Yoder argues viewing Jesus only as Sacrifice is insufficient and he must also be understood as Sovereign (which, he insists, does not necessarily exclude appropriating him as sacrifice). Yoder, however, pushes further than Bender in expanding an understanding of the work of Christ. First, Yoder sees the primary work of God in history not the calling or saving of individuals but the creation of a people, a "new social wholeness" with its own distinct sociology. Second, Yoder begins to articulate a theology of the cross which is both intrinsically political (he calls the cross a political revelation) and, significantly, "emptied" of its redemptive significance if not for the cross-bearing of his discipleship.

Finally both Bender and Yoder stress the necessity of the Holy Spirit for discipleship. Bender, relying on sixteenth-century Anabaptist sources, claims that discipleship is founded on the gift of the Holy Spirit and the realities of regeneration.

¹⁰² Both would have in mind traditional penal substitutionary accounts. See discussion in Bender and Yoder sections respectfully.

Discipleship is “walking in the resurrection.” Yoder likewise continually maintains that what makes discipleship a possibility is the reality, work and miracles of the Holy Spirit. He also refers to other “spiritual resources” that accompany the work of the Spirit which make Christian ethics make sense for Christians. For Yoder the indwelling Spirit was also what made discipleship an impossibility for those in the world, those who had “taken the freedom not yet to believe.”¹⁰³

In subsequent chapters I turn to looking at seven authors who have written about the atonement from the perspective of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. Each of these authors, indirectly or directly, would have been influenced by the articulations of discipleship ecclesiology by both Bender and Yoder. Thus the framework Bender and Yoder provide will be a critical reference point as the analysis proceeds of how the atonement models of these seven authors relate to discipleship ecclesiology.

¹⁰³ Yoder, “Let the Church Be the Church,” 171.

Chapter 2

Anabaptist-Mennonite Atonement Theologies

The first chapter explored the discipleship ecclesiology of Harold Bender and John Howard Yoder, seeing their contributions as representative of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition in the mid-twentieth century. This chapter shifts focus to the atonement theologies of seven authors from the same tradition, each of whom were writing near the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. This exploration will provide a good sense of the state of the Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology. In subsequent chapters these two conversations, on the church as community of disciples and on the atoning work of Christ, will be brought together. By bringing them together, the following thesis will illuminate how they relate to each other and how the concern for the corporate discipleship of church has or has not shaped the way that the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition understands the atonement.

These seven authors are by no means the only authors within the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition who have written about the atonement. Rather they are important both as representatives and generators of recent conversation within the tradition whose writings thus deserve careful attention. They have all written since the 1980s and have thus been impacted by the Anabaptist Renaissance of the mid-twentieth century that both authors of the previous chapter participated in and

shaped. As Reesor-Taylor notes¹⁰⁴ the theology emerging in the wake of *The Anabaptist Vision* attempted to construct a whole theology in light of the fundamental tenets Bender presented.

As this chapter proceeds a few things will become evident. First all of these authors reject penal substitution as an explanation of the atonement. None of these authors see Jesus' death as saving because he bore the punishment that human beings deserved. Second, these authors suggest that Jesus' death must not in any way be separated from the vocation of his disciples, a theme developed further in the next chapter. Third, many of these authors, although not all, see the variegated witness of the New Testament as limiting theology's capacity to construct one atonement model for all time. Nevertheless, these authors suggest there are some ground rules when it comes to interpreting the atonement such as the connection between how Jesus lived and why he died, the importance of Jesus' kingdom proclamation and God's will in creating his people, the church. Finally, as will become clearer as this chapter proceeds, there is no uniform theology of sin, guilt, judgment and the powers or the nature of evil. Given the atonement has been traditionally understood as the way Christ deals with sin, this ought to surprise readers.

¹⁰⁴ Rachel Reesor-Taylor, "Anselm's Cur Deus Homo for a Peace Theology: On the Compatibility of Nonviolence and Sacrificial Atonement" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2009), 164.

John Driver

John Driver is an American Mennonite missionary who worked in diverse contexts such as Puerto Rico, Argentina and Spain for over thirty years before writing his book *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*.¹⁰⁵ The book, written in 1986, is one of the earliest texts on the atonement coming from the seven authors explored in this chapter. In the book Driver first and foremost hopes to recover a sense of the missionary context of the New Testament where, for the sake of communicating effectively the meaning of the gospel to people of different cultural backgrounds, multiple images and motifs were used to explain the atonement.¹⁰⁶ These images are witnesses or “testimonies” to a “reality” which defies any reductionistic “rational definition.”¹⁰⁷ His main aim is not to formulate an atonement model but to explain this communicative dynamic. The bulk of Driver’s book explores the theological import of several of these different images including the conflict-victory motif, archetypal images, the martyr motif, the ransom imagery, substitution/representation motifs and reconciliation. He resists attempting to synthesize any of them.

The second element that furthers Driver’s work is a concern for an articulation of salvation that includes ethics, especially social ethics. To introduce this theme Driver tells a story from his time in Spain. When Francisco Franco died, Driver witnessed some graffiti in Madrid that read “God can’t be trusted. Franco is in heaven.” Driver points out that within this theology, since Franco died in

¹⁰⁵ John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

sacramental communion with the Catholic Church, he is guaranteed safe passage to eternal life. What kind of understanding of atonement would allow Franco to claim salvation yet continue in his awful oppression?¹⁰⁸ For Driver such a deficient understanding of atonement is endemic in Christian theology, and must be corrected. For Christ's work has been perceived as "an abstract transaction" which allows sinful people and structures to remain substantially the same.¹⁰⁹ To correct this Driver returns to the variegated New Testament motifs with fresh perspective seeking to remedy this sad state of affairs. This concern of traditional atonement being an "abstract transaction" will reoccur with some frequency in these authors.

Driver explains that his first set of imagery, which he calls the conflict-victory motif, has real referents even if understood symbolically.¹¹⁰ Jesus came proclaiming God's kingdom and the conflict that this generated led to his death. From this perspective one can "see a continuity between Jesus' life and death."¹¹¹ This continuity is important for Driver as is the victory emerging from the conflict which produces the liberation from the powers. Liberation from the powers was necessary for it was the means of "the re-creation of new possibilities for communion with God and others."¹¹² In other words, Jesus' proclamation and demonstration of the kingdom generates a conflict with the powers which leads to his death. The conflict, however, was necessary to liberate humanity from the powers so that a collective relationship with God can be established. However, Driver does not explain the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 79.

¹¹² Ibid., 82.

mechanisms by which the conflict generated the victory. This theme of conflict with the powers has come up in these atonement theologies and will be developed further by other authors, especially Finger and Weaver.

The next set of images that Driver explores includes “Representative Man, Pioneer, Forerunner and Firstborn.” Surprisingly, he notes that while not important for current atonement models, these images played a major role in the New Testament understanding of the work of Christ.¹¹³ Behind the New Testament usage is “the Hebrew concept of corporate personality” where “the life of the people... was focused synthetically” on one person.¹¹⁴ Representation means that Jesus’ death was not in substitution of his followers’, but rather it is something in which his followers will participate.¹¹⁵ Representatively Christ’s death signifies “the end of fallen humanity” and “the destruction of sinners with their sin.”¹¹⁶ His resurrection, on the other hand, is “the beginning of a new humanity.”¹¹⁷

The third major motif that Driver explores is the Martyr motif. This motif integrates Christ’s mission and death with the suffering of the early church.¹¹⁸ This imagery also has a double sense, referring both to Jesus’ witness “to the coming of the kingdom of God” and the “giving of his life in faithfulness” to his mission.¹¹⁹ Once again Driver stresses Jesus’ death has meaning when seen in continuity with his life’s mission.

¹¹³ Ibid., 101.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 103. Also 21.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 108.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 109.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 116.

The fourth area that Driver explores is the Redemption-Purchase motif. Here, although release from slavery is a constituent element, the stress is actually on “change of ownership, rather than simply setting slaves free.”¹²⁰ Just as God’s action in the Exodus formed Israel to be his people, so too the work of Christ creates the church.¹²¹ The ransom image is an example of what biblical imagery communicates and the limits of this communication. The central thrust of the ransom image is “coming into peoplehood under God,” while no “particular attention [is paid] to the details of the act of ransoming.”¹²²

The salvation resulting from Christ’s work which is variously communicated through these images, according to Driver, is “cosmic as well as social and personal in scope.”¹²³ The “full significance of the death of Christ for the restoration of all things” is ultimately a mystery that is in some sense incomprehensible. Yet, in spite of the mystery, one thing is certain: “the compassionate, self-sacrificing love of God in Christ is both the means for the restoration of creation as well as the determinate force in restored creation.”¹²⁴

Thus in order to articulate an understanding of the atonement that is more holistic than traditional understandings Driver turns to the variegated witness of the New Testament with its multiple images and motifs. In doing so Driver distills significant themes on the atonement including the importance of peoplehood as a central thrust of the images and the implicit continuity between Jesus’ life and death

¹²⁰ Ibid., 169.

¹²¹ Ibid., 170.

¹²² Ibid., 174.

¹²³ Ibid., 231.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 240.

that these motifs point to. In the end the saving significance of Christ's work is broadened in scope while the means of his work remains somewhat mysterious.

C. Norman Kraus

C. Norman Kraus is a Mennonite pastor who was both a theological educator in the United States and a missionary in Japan. His book *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective* was published in 1987 as the first volume of his Systematic Theology series and contains his own contribution to Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology. This book is more broadly about Christology but contains his own reflections on the atonement. Kraus' understanding of atonement is rooted in the Christology that he develops in this text as he seeks to harmonize what he calls the "Gestalt" of the New Testament's variegated witness to "Jesus as the Christ of God."¹²⁵ In his Christology he connects an understanding of Jesus as revelation of God, of Jesus' mission as enacting the kingdom, and of covenant renewal as the meaning of salvation.

Kraus, like Driver, observes that the New Testament uses a diverse range of images to communicate the meaning of Christ's work. Kraus emphasizes that these different images do not contradict each other. Rather, "they are complementary and probably represent attempts to give an authentic presentation of Jesus . . . in different cultural settings."¹²⁶ The *Gestalt* is the "consensus of conviction" that emerges from "the partial character of the many metaphors" used in the New

¹²⁵ C. Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from A Disciple's Perspective* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 27.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

Testament and, Kraus argues, “becomes the norm for evaluating the variations in the terminology and images of individual writers.”¹²⁷ This is because the “individual texts [function] as a *witness to* the original revelational experience.”¹²⁸ In other words, Jesus himself is the revelation and the New Testament is a series of texts pointing to this revelation in different and always partial ways.

This understanding of revelation is not merely an incidental methodological consideration, but central to Kraus’ Christ. Christ revealed God in a fullness not approached anywhere else. Kraus states that “it is not that the God of Moses . . . is already well known [rather] the God who at best was dimly and inadequately known through creation and law reveals fuller dimensions of his character to us in Jesus.”¹²⁹ This in turn affects how God is understood as Creator and Judge, as “God is the kind of God who [relates] to the universe, human beings and history like he related to us in Christ.” More concretely expressed, this God “takes the form of a servant. He comes as one of the disinherited and oppressed. His kingly crown is made of thorns.”¹³⁰

Just as in Kraus’ presentation Jesus reveals a different kind of God, so too Jesus is presented as a different kind of king. Jesus came to both “announce and inaugurate the beginning of the new rule of God as a socio-spiritual pattern” and to appoint “his followers to continue this mission.”¹³¹ Although multiple metaphors are used to communicate the work of Christ, the end of this work is in changing reality.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 86. Italics original.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 103.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 140.

Jesus came “actually to inaugurate a new beginning” the end goal of which was “to create a new order of relationships in keeping with his own nature and will to love.”¹³²

Jesus thus created the “radical new possibility” that his followers can live out the future of God within the midst of our present reality, a future marked by *agape* love.¹³³ Kraus is similar to Driver in his emphasis on the kingdom.

Kraus points to different dimensions to this proclaimed and enacted kingdom of God. The first, and most integrally, is “the restoration of covenant relationship to God and each other.”¹³⁴ Kraus argues that covenant restoration is scripturally “perhaps the most comprehensive interpretive category used ... to describe God’s saving activity.”¹³⁵ He connects this to the plight of the Gentiles, who are often seen as outside the covenant, for whom finding “salvation... is equated with inclusion under the covenant authority of the only true God.”¹³⁶ Likewise, the Old Testament hope for the Messiah, for the dawning of the new age, was simultaneously the hope for a new covenant that was promised by God. This “promise was that God would establish a new kind of covenant which would more effectively internalize and personalize the relation between each Israelite and God...the church” is understood to be Christ’s work in fulfilling this promise.¹³⁷ This covenant renewal is the ultimate end of the work of Christ. Kraus puts it simply: “Salvation is a relationship to God.”¹³⁸

¹³² Ibid., 145. Italics original.

¹³³ Ibid., 173.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 174.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 176.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 177.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 168.

Although Driver does not reflect on the nature of sin, guilt and judgment, Kraus does. He has extended reflections on the subjective experience and objective reality of both shame and guilt.¹³⁹ In these reflections he suggests that the cross, to be understood meaningfully, must respond to both realities in both of these dimensions. He suggests that, in different ways, those who experience shame and guilt do not respond well to retributive violence (which he calls “the law of talion”).¹⁴⁰ Retribution could respond to guilt in its secondary level experience as “anticipation of punishment”¹⁴¹ but would be ineffectual in responding to their subjective or objective realities of shame. After outlining his understanding of shame and guilt, and how the cross responds to both, he applies this understanding to the Japanese cultural context. In doing so he shows how his theory could be applicable across different cultures. Kraus’ understanding will be explored further in the fourth chapter.

In his account Kraus is less concerned about how Christ’s death was atoning for sin and more concerned about articulating his overall work. Christ came to inaugurate a new order, to bring the kingdom of God. This transformation he came to bring will include his disciples who will participate in this mission. While more broadly concerned about this “socio-spiritual pattern” Kraus does include Christ’s work in dealing with both the guilt and shame of sin although he does not closely examine how the two are related.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 206ff.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 215.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 224-226.

Thomas N. Finger

Thomas Finger is an Anabaptist scholar who has written about the atonement in a number of articles and several books over the course of the past three decades. This thesis focuses on the proposals found in the two-volume work *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*,¹⁴² published in 1985 and 1989, and *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*,¹⁴³ published nearly twenty years later. The books are conceived differently; the former as a general systematic theology while the latter as a specifically Anabaptist proposal. In both projects Finger retrieves Christus Victor as his atonement model, but in doing so distinguishes himself both from previous uses of the model and from other contemporary Anabaptist approaches. It is in his later project that he articulates his model in light of the Anabaptist tradition explicitly and differentiates his model from other writers such as Weaver and Kraus. Although he is doing different things in both works, his accounts of Christus Victor are similar enough in substance to be included together in this and the next few chapters.

While both deal with a Christus Victor model the two texts present the theme differently yet in a complementary way. He argues that while satisfaction and moral influence models seem to be more logically consistent, they exclude important biblical data. While Christus Victor may be riddled with paradox it nevertheless is “better able” to “handle the broad, rich diversity of the biblical data on these

¹⁴² Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, vol. 1, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985).

¹⁴³ Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

themes.”¹⁴⁴ For Finger there are three interrelated dimensions of the Christus Victor model of atonement. This section looks at the three dimensions he names, draws out their essence and indicates their interrelationship. Prior to this it looks at what Finger indicates all Christus Victor models (not just his own) have in common.

According to Finger all the different variations of the Christus Victor model have in common several features. The first is that “humans were created to attain divinization by walking with God, but followed the devil instead.” Second, this falling away from divine purposes resulted in oppression from “evil powers, corruption and death.” Third, God’s punishment of humankind is not direct but indirect through “handing [humans] over, individually and corporately, to the forces they have obeyed.”¹⁴⁵ Finger adds to these common features three dimensions that are essential to his own proposals.

The first dimension of Christus Victor that Finger explores is what he calls the *conflictive dimension*.¹⁴⁶ He finds this dimension in both the Gospel stories of Jesus’ exorcisms and confrontation with the demonic,¹⁴⁷ but also in the gospel proclamations found in both Acts and the rest of the New Testament.¹⁴⁸ This conflict includes Jesus’ way of servanthood and peace versus the way of the powers. In this sense Finger finds agreement with authors such as J. Denny Weaver and Walter Wink who, in Finger’s view, “helpfully illumine Christus Victor’s social dimensions,

¹⁴⁴ Finger, *Christian Theology*, 1:347–48.

¹⁴⁵ Finger, *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 332.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 355-57.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 356.

explaining how Jesus, through his Servant pattern, brought God's domination-free, nonviolent kingdom."¹⁴⁹

Finger stresses that the way Jesus lived, this "servant pattern," is integral to the meaning of Christ's victory. The "nonviolent, servantlike humility" of Jesus was actually a "Spirit-imbued comportment through which Jesus resisted and countered the powers' domineering, violent energy."¹⁵⁰ An understanding of Christ and his work "should not simply show that he was fully human but also *what kind of human he was* and what kind of path he trod."¹⁵¹ Since Jesus died because of the way he lived one cannot understand the saving significance of Jesus' death without understanding the way he lived.¹⁵² From this perspective Finger critiques Anselm who makes no "concrete emphasis on [Jesus'] kingdom ministry" in his atonement theology.¹⁵³ For while Anselm saw the necessity of Jesus' obedience for the efficacy of his work, "specifically how he lived [is] irrelevant" to his atonement theory.¹⁵⁴ Finger is like Driver in stressing the connection between what Jesus taught and how he lived with why he died.

The second dimension that Finger sees in *Christus Victor* is the *transformative dimension*. Here the victory of Christ is seen as providing for "ontological transformation (by, but not into, divine energy)." Drawing on language from sixteenth-century Anabaptists, Finger suggests that the powers (from which Christ liberates) "operate through ... inner corruption or poison, which pervades

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 356-57.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 360.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 417. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵² Finger, *Christian Theology*, 1:303.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 1:307.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:308.

people individually and corporately.” Jesus’ resurrection from the dead then “bestows the Spirit” which “clears out the channel” opening up for the transformation for which human beings were intended.¹⁵⁵ Before the coming of Jesus, “the powers, by ruling humans through their own corruption, blocked the Spirit from transforming them.”¹⁵⁶ Atonement would require someone free enough from the powers to receive the Spirit and then, in doing so, open up the way for all humans to receive the Spirit.¹⁵⁷

The conflictive dimension is not enough and necessitates a transformative dimension in order to fully comprehend Christ’s work. Finger argues that because Christus Victor properly expresses a “deep spiritual conflict,” writers will actually “distort Christus Victor and [its] biblical themes” if they only adopt a conflictive dimension and understand it horizontally and historically.¹⁵⁸ The conflictive and transformative dimensions are “mutually reinforcing [and] each is weakened and distorted in separated from the other.”¹⁵⁹ This presumably means that just as historicizing Christus Victor will miss the important spiritual meaning, so too spiritualizing it, to the neglect of the historical and political aspect of Christ’s work, will be equally distorting.

The third dimension that Finger explores is the paradoxical relationship between God, humankind and the powers, particularly in light of God’s calling and judgment. In “nearly all versions” of Christus Victor, God does punish sin but does so

¹⁵⁵ Finger, *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 358.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 363.

indirectly. This is because sin is essentially “choosing other lords.” Therefore God punishes this sin by letting these other lords have dominion over human sinners.¹⁶⁰ Jesus’ victory then consists not only in conflict with the powers and ontological transformation of human beings but a vindication against the powers. Jesus’ own vindication in resurrection did “simultaneously condemn his enemies.”¹⁶¹ The paradox is twofold in that God “judges by means of the powers, and that God judges the powers.” For first of all Jesus bears God’s judgment through the infliction of death performed by the powers. Second, these same powers which execute God’s judgment in killing Jesus are then “judged and defeated by Jesus in the same act.”¹⁶² Finger’s stress on paradox is different from the other authors who concentrate on the function of imagery in the New Testament but is similar in how it resists the synthetic work of developing one model of “how it works.”

The paradox of God, the powers and judgment, is furthered when one considers that, given human sin, their dominion in deed seems legitimate: “for people have turned away from God and received their just deserts.”¹⁶³ Yet, on the other hand, it seems that the powers’ exercise this dominion “in oppressive and unjust ways” which necessitates God’s saving action in Christ. Finger suggests that it is this kind of complex interrelationship between these three elements and the paradoxes of the powers and God’s judgment which caused “many to reject the Christus Victor motif in favor of the straightforward clarity of the substitutionary

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 362.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 363.

¹⁶² Finger, *Christian Theology*, 1:332.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 1:318.

and moral influence approaches.”¹⁶⁴ Where Kraus focused on the subjective and objective dimensions of shame and guilt it seems that Finger focuses on the dynamic nature of evil in the form of the powers’ oppressions. Aside from these reflections on humanity being handed over to their own sin, Finger does not reflect on how guilt and shame operate within either *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach* or *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*.

Mark Baker and Joel B. Green

In their book *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Mark Baker and Joel B. Green present an understanding of the atonement which focuses both on the scandal of the cross and the imperative to communicate the message of the cross across cultures throughout history. In this way they express concerns similar to those of John Driver. Their concern is atonement, which they define as “the saving significance of Jesus’ death.”¹⁶⁵ They state early on that “in the early decades of the Christian movement, the scandal of the cross was far more self-evident than was its meaning.”¹⁶⁶ They explore this scandal in three ways that are pertinent here. First, they find multiple narratives in the New Testament which furnish the context for understanding the meaning of the atonement, making the cross understandable while still scandalous. Second, they see that the New Testament uses a myriad of images, models and metaphors to communicate the “profundity” of Christ’s work,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Mark Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 53.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 34.

and offer reflections on communicating with people from multiple cultural contexts. Finally, Baker and Green narrate the history of atonement theology differentiating faithful and effective communication of the atonement in different cultural contexts from unfaithful and ineffective communication. They posit that theologies will never arrive at a final, fixed atonement model because atonement models will always be in construction across different cultural contexts.

Baker and Green suggest that the New Testament presents “Jesus’ crucifixion [as] firmly embedded in multiple narrative contexts in the New Testament. The story itself is set within larger narratives of Jesus’ life and ministry, which are themselves set within the larger story of God’s interactions with God’s people.”¹⁶⁷ The three narratives of “Scripture, Jesus, and the Church’s discipleship” are so interconnected that they are considered one story.¹⁶⁸ To understand the death of Jesus one has to understand his life; to understand his life one must understand the story of Israel in the Old Testament and these understandings will be incomplete without seeing their end in the corporate discipleship of the church. This stress on connecting Jesus’ death with his life has already been seen in Finger, Kraus and Driver.

Baker and Green emphasize the importance of having the right narrative for interpreting the meaning of Jesus’ life and death through their exegesis of the Emmaus story from Luke 24. In this story the disciples are downcast, unable to understand the recent events of Jesus’ crucifixion. “What is their dilemma?” Baker

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.

and Green ask. Simply that “these disciples [had] situated the death of Jesus on a Roman cross within a narrative the conclusion of which can only be dashed hopes . . . having understood Jesus’ ministry in terms borrowed from Israel’s expectation of a liberator like Moses these disciples [had] *no interpretive tools*” for making sense of what just happened to Jesus.¹⁶⁹

Baker and Green are consistently critical of penal-substitutionary models of atonement. Their criticisms suggest that the penal-substitutionary models have taken the “cultural narrative of the West, with its emphases on individualism and mechanism” and imposed them upon the cross.¹⁷⁰ In doing so the three narratives mentioned above are nullified and their interpretative potential atrophies. In penal substitution a concern for “the salvation of a sinner from God’s impending wrath” replaces the Gospel’s concern for “God’s agenda for Israel and, then, God’s restorative purpose for the cosmos,” which are “too easily set aside.”¹⁷¹

As Baker and Green understand it, “the followers of Jesus have never been content with the ‘brute’ fact that Jesus died but have always been concerned with the interpretation of this fact.”¹⁷² Yet from the beginning “the death of Jesus proved capable of multiple interpretations.”¹⁷³ There are “five constellations of images” found in the New Testament which express the salvific efficacy of Jesus’ death.¹⁷⁴ Why so many interpretations, so many different images of something so central and important? According to Baker and Green this is because those who wrote the New

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 24. Emphasis mine.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁷² Ibid., 114.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 35.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 41.

Testament “were not concerned to set forth the content of the faith for all time,” nor did they attempt to create a systematic theology.¹⁷⁵ The texts are “located first in a particular social world with its own pattern of speech, needs and cultural assumptions.”¹⁷⁶ Thus these early authors spoke about the scandal of the cross in the idioms of their own culture. The New Testament functions prototypically for theology. By engaging the New Testament one “learns how the theological task has been undertaken and exemplified,” enabling contemporary proclamations of the cross to be contextually appropriate. The danger lies in an “attempt instead to carry over into [contemporary] pronouncements models and metaphors that belong to another age and that are dead” to contemporary culture.¹⁷⁷

To exemplify this theological task of communicating the scandal of the cross across cultures, Baker and Green compare and contrast Anselm of Canterbury and C. Norman Kraus. Like the authors of the New Testament Anselm “sought to interpret the cross with images easily intelligible to the people of his era.” In this way Anselm offers a positive model of how to do atonement theology that is not overly dependent on images coming from the New Testament’s cultural context.¹⁷⁸ Yet Anselm also offers a model of how not to do atonement theology as he “does more than just use images and experiences from daily life to illustrate the atonement; he allows his experience of medieval life - its logic and conventional wisdom - to have an overwhelming influence in the shaping of his model of the atonement.”¹⁷⁹ Thus

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 112.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 156.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 157.

he uses feudal imagery not only to communicate the Gospel but allows “medieval concepts . . . to *define how God ought to act.*”¹⁸⁰ C. Norman Kraus, on the other hand, develops his model of the atonement that communicates in a new cultural context (in his case, Japanese culture rooted in honour/shame) yet “in a way that is strongly rooted in the pivotal themes . . . observed in the New Testament writing on the cross.”¹⁸¹ In this way Kraus accomplishes “the balancing act” of speaking to a “particular social context” while at the same time evidencing “fidelity to the narrative of Scripture.”¹⁸² Like Driver and unlike Kraus or Finger the authors do not spend time reflecting on the nature of sin, the powers and judgment. Aside from a few comments about some atonement theologies imposing culturally foreign views of individualism and mechanism upon the New Testament they themselves do not engage in this conversation.

J. Denny Weaver

J. Denny Weaver has spent most of his scholarly career developing a model of atonement he claims is consistent with the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.¹⁸³ This project found its culmination in his book *A Nonviolent Atonement* in which he develops an atonement model he calls Narrative Christus Victor. He differentiates his model from earlier versions of the Christus Victor motif (as articulated by Gustaf Aulén) by making the historical conflict Jesus generated in his life and ministry an

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 158. Emphasis original.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 207.

¹⁸² Ibid., 50.

¹⁸³ Beginning with essays on atonement in the 1980s and 1990s and a book about nineteenth-century Mennonite atonement theology. See the bibliography for a complete list of his atonement writings.

intrinsic part of his atoning work.¹⁸⁴ This emphasis on connecting Jesus' life and his death is seen already in Driver, Kraus, Finger, Baker, and Green, and will be seen again in Belousek. He seeks to ground his model biblically by suggesting that his motif makes the most sense of texts as diverse as Revelation, the Gospels, letters of Paul and the Old Testament history of Israel.¹⁸⁵ He also turns to more theological questions, attempting to show how his model answers traditional theological questions about the work of Christ¹⁸⁶ and recent constructive work done by Black, Feminist and Womanist theologians.¹⁸⁷ These conversations constitute a third of his book, indicating the priority of liberationist themes for Weaver in formulating his model of atonement.

The heart of Weaver's model is the claim that Jesus' mission was "to witness to the presence of the reign of God in history."¹⁸⁸ As part of this witnessing, Jesus' life and teaching "show that the objectives of the reign of God are not accomplished by violence."¹⁸⁹ Therefore his mission was not primarily to die as some legal transaction outside of history, as in substitutionary atonement, but to witness to this nonviolent reign of God. Yet part of this mission included Jesus' willingness and readiness to die. His death was a result of his mission not a requirement of it.¹⁹⁰ This is a newer idea in Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology but has its precursors

¹⁸⁴ J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 23.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Chapters 4-6.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 57. Weaver uses this phrase multiple times in his book, including, for example, on 40, 43, 44.)

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

in both Driver and Kraus. It is inevitable, given both the powers of evil the reign of God confronts and the nonviolent constitution of God's reign, that Jesus' death would be the "result of his mission to make manifest the reign of God in human history."¹⁹¹ This emphasis on kingdom mission is not new to his work but has been seen already (with slightly different language) in the proposals of Driver, Kraus and Finger.

If Jesus' death was not the point of his mission but the cost of it, then in Jesus' resurrection is the vindication of the mission and the victory of God's reign. His resurrection "turned the seeming defeat [of his death] into a great victory, which forever revealed God's control of the universe and freed sinful humans from the power of sin and Satan."¹⁹² Weaver states that the resurrection is also God's overcoming of "the ultimate enemy-death."¹⁹³ Thus with death overcome "a new era had begun in the reign of God in history."¹⁹⁴

Another close constituent element of his model is the strong dichotomy that he posits between the reign of God and, what he calls in one place, the "non-reign-of-God."¹⁹⁵ This conflict is between Jesus, the representative of God's reign, and the rule of evil: "a confrontation between good and evil, between the forces of God and

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁹² Ibid., 15.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 45-46, n48. Weaver explores this term further in: "Living in the Reign of God in 'The Real World': Getting Beyond Two-Kingdom Theology," in *Exiles in the Empire: Believers Church Perspectives on Politics*, Studies in the Believers Church Tradition, ed. Nathan E. Yoder and Carol A. Scheppard (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006), 173-193.

the forces of Satan, between Christ and anti-Christ.”¹⁹⁶ This conflict with the powers motif was already seen in Finger, but is not as prominent in Driver, Kraus, Baker or Green. This confrontation, he insists, is both cosmic (as in the traditional motif : a conflict between God and Satan) and historical where there is a conflict between social structures, of Church and Empire.¹⁹⁷ Narrative Christus Victor seeks to put the devil back into the equation “that Anselm removed.” Yet the devil, and the forces of evil, are envisioned very differently, a difference which “makes all the difference in the world.”¹⁹⁸ Weaver follows Walter Wink’s understanding of Satan “as the accumulation of earthly structures which are not ruled by the reign of God.”¹⁹⁹ The powers and principalities are the “ ‘spiritual’ dimension of material structures [such as] the state, corporation, economic structures, educational institutions, and so on.”²⁰⁰ This means that the cosmic and historical dimensions of the conflict between God’s reign and the non-reign-of-God are related, but significantly different. On the cosmic, transcendent level there is no competition: God’s rule is real and all that is not God’s rule is not real. Yet in the historical realm there is real conflict between the earthly representatives of God’s rule (first Jesus, then the church) and the social structures of Empire which generate persecution, oppression and death. Weaver, like Finger, reflects heavily on the nature of the powers but less so on the nature of sin, guilt, shame and judgment as does Kraus.

¹⁹⁶ Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 21.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 307.

For Weaver, an understanding the work of Christ in witnessing to the reign of God in history, was lost with the dawn of Christendom and what he calls the “Constantinian synthesis.”²⁰¹ The atonement motif, being “also an image of ecclesiology,” thus supposes “that the structure that makes visible the reign of God poses a contrast to or a witness to the social order that does not know or acknowledge the reign of God.”²⁰² In other words, for this atonement model to make sense there has to be a lived sense that there is a difference between church and world, between the community of Christ and the empire. With the gradual shifts that took place in the third and fourth centuries, symbolized by Constantine, the church moved from confronting the society around it to supporting and being supported by the Empire leading eventually to the “fusion of church and social order.”²⁰³ The loss of this lived sense means that the confrontation between the two reigns, so integral to understanding the atonement, became senseless. His model can be read as attempt to make Christus Victor make sense again.

A final note should be reemphasized in summarizing this book. Most of the book is putting his Narrative Christus Victor into conversation with Black, Feminist and Womanist theologians. These theologians do not necessarily determine Weaver’s model but they do play an important part in clarifying his language, thoughts and priorities. In subsequent chapters atonement grammars and discipleship ecclesiology these engagements will be looked at in more detail; suffice it to say that these are significant.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 102.

²⁰² Ibid., 101-2.

²⁰³ Ibid., 104.

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek is a recent contributor to the Anabaptist-Mennonite discussion on atonement theology, publishing his book *Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* in 2012.²⁰⁴ In this text he argues for a non-retributive reading of the cross. His main aims in the work are threefold. First, he seeks to understand “how God does justice and makes peace through the saving cross of Christ.” Secondly, he hopes to unearth the consequence of God’s work in the cross “for Christian action concerning issues of justice and peace.”²⁰⁵ Finally, in doing both he hopes to “recast our vision for the mission of the church as part of God’s purpose of redemption through the cross and resurrection of Christ.”²⁰⁶ This recasting of the church as part of God’s redemptive plan has already been seen in both Kraus and Weaver.

In setting out with this aim Belousek seeks to engage both Christians who are concerned about the cross but not peace and justice as well as Christians who are concerned with peace and justice but not with the cross.²⁰⁷ He roots this dichotomy in a faulty “both-and” theology that seeks to keep *both* the message of the cross (conceived in substitutionary terms) *and* the church’s mission in doing justice and making peace but fails to adequately integrate them, showing how the message of

²⁰⁴ Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, ix.

the cross shapes the church's mission.²⁰⁸ He notes the presence of this both-and theology (and its language) in the foundational documents of key organizations promising to connect the cross to action for justice and peace including Evangelicals for Social Action, Sojourners and the Lausanne movement.²⁰⁹ He also sees it in key theologians promising to do the same, such as Ron Sider.²¹⁰ What this shows is

“[a lack of] an adequate theological bridge joining the two sides of the ‘both-and.’ In particular the affirmation of Christian action for justice and peace is often independent of a biblical theology of the cross—why and how Christ died is disconnected from why and how Christians are called to do justice and make peace in the name of Christ.”²¹¹

Why this insidious disconnect? For Belousek this disconnect emerges from a reading of the cross that uncritically assumes a retributive paradigm.²¹² His book can be read as an attempt to have a biblically based, non-retributive reading of the cross for the sake of “an adequate theological bridge” to Christian action for justice and peace. His concerns here align with the recent tradition of Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology, following well with Driver, Kraus, Finger, Baker, Green and Weaver in their emphasis on social ethics.

Belousek defines retribution as “repayment in kind” and sees it as the core principle of the retributive paradigm. This paradigm “understands retribution to constitute of the heart of reality — morality and society, nature and God.”²¹³ This principle, and its wider paradigm, is what “connects the rationale for capital punishment and just war, on the one hand, to the rationale for penal substitution, on

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

²¹¹ Ibid., 5.

²¹² Ibid., 3.

²¹³ Ibid., 25.

the other.”²¹⁴ Belousek makes the assertion that retribution is “an ingrained instinct . . . [which] originates in the Fall.”²¹⁵ He hopes to reframe “the message of the cross within the biblical story of redemption”²¹⁶ to counter retributive-fuelled readings.

To this end Belousek develops three rules for a “cruciform hermeneutic.” First, the cross must be seen in continuity and as consistent with both the life-ministry of Jesus and his resurrection.²¹⁷ The second rule is to see the whole of Jesus’ story, his life, death and resurrection, as completing and fulfilling the vision and “promises of God’s covenant with Israel.”²¹⁸ The final rule is to see the cross, read through these lenses, as a revelation (and in particular, revealing the justice of God).²¹⁹ Belousek asserts that “the way of Jesus in the world - his teaching and healing, cross and resurrection -is thus a window onto God’s characteristic way of being and acting.” Although this has a myriad of implications, one of them is that it cannot be determined “in advance the character of God’s justice and peace apart from the revelation through Jesus Christ.”²²⁰ This is an implication directly related to the uncritical retributive readings of the cross Belousek seeks to change. Arising from these three rules Belousek sees the renouncing of retribution as key: “the way of God’s kingdom renounces retaliatory resistance to evil and returns right for wrong, good for evil, seeking to overcome evil with good.”²²¹ Many of these themes,

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 391.

²¹⁶ Ibid., x.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., 16.

such as Jesus' life connected with his death, have been seen already in the other authors.

Reading the cross through these three rules, and "guided by the gospel accounts," Belousek "began seeing the cross itself as a crime scene. Instead of seeing the cross as God's punishment of innocent Jesus in place of guilty humanity (per penal substitution), [he] saw the cross as humanity's murder of God in the person of Jesus."²²² Instead of seeing the cross as an answer to the question of how a wrathful God would deal with sinful human beings he writes that he "began seeing the cross as posing the *question* of how God-in-Christ would faithfully right the ultimate wrong in cosmic history."²²³ In this framing the cross does not satisfy retribution but increases the apparent need for retribution. What is God to do?²²⁴ What, retributively, can be given in return for the act of murdering God incarnate except the utter destruction of humanity? If this were the case then God's salvific purpose would be finally frustrated. Yet, "Jesus has asked God to forgive humanity this crime of cosmic magnitude and God has graciously accepted Jesus' plea of mercy and offered forgiveness to all humanity in the name of Jesus."²²⁵ Here "the saving significance of the cross . . . is that through the cross God-in-Christ decisively transcends retribution, breaking and overcoming the 'Newtonian law' that 'for every atrocity there must be an equal and opposite atrocity.'"²²⁶ Thus, for Belousek,

²²² Ibid., 10.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 23.

²²⁵ Ibid., 389.

²²⁶ Ibid., 390.

atonement does not result from a divine retributive act aimed at Christ but results from a divine act against retribution through Christ's death.

Rachel Reesor-Taylor

In her dissertation on Anselm's atonement theology, Rachel Reesor-Taylor makes the bold and unique, among the authors' surveyed here, claim that satisfaction atonement does not contradict but is rather fully compatible with Peace Theology.²²⁷ She traces the term Peace Theology to theological discussions centred at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in the 1980s and defines it as the quest "for a theology that has pacifism as an integral, central shaping element, rather than an optional specific appendage to an otherwise typical Protestant theology."²²⁸ It "emphasizes the human response to God's merciful action in communities of disciples, serving justice and peace, advocating a restorative justice, and rejecting lethal violence, even in the face of death."²²⁹ The emphasis is more particularly on "the church as a community of disciples who follow in the way of non-violence and restorative justice, [an understanding which] involves an expectation of human transformation."²³⁰ In other words what she describes as a Peace Theology is what this thesis has been describing in the terms of Anabaptist-Mennonite discipleship

²²⁷ Rachel Reesor-Taylor, "Anselm's Cur Deus Homo for a Peace Theology: On the Compatibility of Nonviolence and Sacrificial Atonement" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2009).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

ecclesiology. She traces the origins of this Peace Theology to Harold Bender's *Anabaptist Vision*.²³¹

In order to show this compatibility, Reesor-Taylor has to distinguish between traditional, and unhelpful, interpretations of Anselm and recent, scholarly interpretations that read his *Cur Deus Homo* in light of its medieval and sacramental context. The poor interpretation (which Reesor-Taylor roots in nineteenth-century liberal theology) suggests that Anselm "depicts a God who is unable to forgive without being paid, or without punishing, but who waits for satisfaction that salvation is really bought instead of by grace."²³² These interpretations charge Anselm's atonement model as being "legal, juridical and transactional."²³³ Reesor-Taylor's critiques of Anselm from the position of Peace Theology (drawing mainly on Yoder, Driver and Weaver) largely follow these critiques but add the element of discipleship suggesting that on top of these other inadequacies Anselm fails to integrate the community of disciples into his atonement model.²³⁴

To correct this interpretation, one must read Anselm in a way that assumes his "original Catholic, sacramental and sacrificial framework."²³⁵ Reesor-Taylor points to two distinctions that make all the difference in correctly reading Anselm and, thus, seeing him as compatible with a Peace Theology. First is the distinction between punishment and satisfaction. Second is the distinction between public and private honour, in relation both to Anselm's feudal context and his theological

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²³² *Ibid.*, 11.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 63

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, abstract.

understanding of God's justice. For Anselm "the remission of sins is necessary." This raises the questions: "By what rationale does God forgive sins? What is sin? What is it to give satisfaction for sin?"²³⁶ To understand both Anselm's questions and his assertion that remission is necessary, one needs to understand these two distinctions.

Reesor-Taylor suggests that "if the only two possibilities were either punishment or forgiveness with no satisfaction, then Anselm, by process of elimination, would seem to be opting for punishment since Anselm declares that forgiveness without payment would be unjust." Yet what if there was a third way, an alternative to this either-or? Anselm suggests this kind of "third possibility, namely, forgiveness with restoration or satisfaction."²³⁷ It would not be right for God to forgive without "either payment or repayment. Punishment was not required, however, if payment was made. Restitution is a form of payment."²³⁸ Thus for Anselm there is an important and absolutely essential distinction made between punishment and satisfaction, with the latter being the alternative to the former. Satisfaction is the free choice of making amends for something a person has done wrong. Punishment is coerced repayment from an unrepentant guilty party. Reesor-Taylor suggests that Anselm's insistence on "the need for satisfaction is grounded in the same sense as the need for reparation or restitution in the restorative justice movement."²³⁹ In fact "Anselm's insistence that God cannot dismiss sin without

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid., 85.

²³⁸ Ibid., 86.

²³⁹ Ibid., 168.

payment is like an advocate of restorative justice who regards some kind of restitution to be part of restoring the offender to community.”²⁴⁰

This distinction between punishment and satisfaction is rooted in a social understanding of sin. That is to say that sin impacts human social reality and, even with forgiveness, “the chaos resulting from sin remains.”²⁴¹ It is the nature of sin to create a victim-offender relationship. As Reesor-Taylor argues “the insistence upon satisfaction can be understood as a way of acknowledging the rights of sin’s victims.”²⁴² Since history has its victims, and God is seen as “the defender of the weak,” it seems appropriate to both Anselm and Reesor-Taylor that “God demand satisfaction.”²⁴³

This understanding of the social nature of sin reflects back on Anselm’s feudal concepts of a lord’s honour. Recent scholarship suggests that a lord’s honour is not to be understood as his own personal honour but rather his status as “guarantor of the public peace.”²⁴⁴ In other words, to offend a lord’s honour is to cause disruption in the social order. When Anselm mines his feudal context for atonement metaphors his choice of a lord’s honour is thus entirely appropriate. To sin is to challenge God’s honour precisely by violating victims whom God has sworn to defend. Reesor-Taylor illustrates this point by engaging with an example that Denny Weaver gave in criticism of Anselm’s honour motif. Weaver’s original example had a “teacher maintaining authority, and imagined that the problem was a

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 118.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

student sassing her teacher.”²⁴⁵ Her new example, reflecting this new scholarship, pictures “a teacher dealing with the problem of one student hurting another.”²⁴⁶

Since God is the defender of the weak, it was “appropriate that God demand[ed] satisfaction.”²⁴⁷ Jesus’ death is seen as making satisfaction for humanity’s sins. Since Jesus made satisfaction by offering his own life, “punishment was not necessary.”²⁴⁸ God did not demand punishment or put Jesus to death. Instead Jesus offered himself, freely as a human being and thus made atonement for humankind.²⁴⁹

Reesor-Taylor’s has two strong arguments throughout her dissertation on the compatibility between Anselm and Peace Theology. First, she makes almost constant reference to the similarities between a restorative justice vision and Anselm concerning their visions on crime, sin, obligation and restoration. Second, she shows how Anselm, rightly read, does make room in his theology for the role of discipleship as both imitation and transformation. But perhaps her strongest contribution is not showing the compatibility between the two theologies but exposing an inadequate reflection on the nature of sin as the missing piece of Peace Theology.

She quotes approvingly of Douglas John Hall’s proposal that in North America theologians need to develop a “theology for the oppressor rather than for the

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 103.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 187.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 116.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

oppressed.”²⁵⁰ Given that most theology acknowledges “participation in oppression,” she questions why there has not been more reflection on “guilt as a category that matters.”²⁵¹ Anselm is strong on this point because he wrote “as a guilty party, as though past guilt mattered and as though forgiveness cannot simply be presumed.”²⁵² In reflecting on the reality of guilt she even allows for the legitimacy of punishment. She asserts that acknowledging the legitimacy of punishment contradicts neither restorative justice nor feminist theology.²⁵³ Restorative justice would only add that punishment be seen not as the goal, but as one of the means towards reconciliation.²⁵⁴ Feminism sees the problem not in punishment but infliction of punishment on an innocent party. This is a very significant distinction.²⁵⁵ She argues that Anselm’s atonement theology would be compatible with both distinctions and with a “theology of the oppressor” but she questions whether contemporary Peace Theology would be.

Summary

These seven authors share a convergence of concerns as they articulate their understandings of the work of Christ. Two themes that emerge in almost all the authors are, first, the importance of (as Denny Weaver puts it) keeping salvation ethical and, second, the importance of articulating the significance of Jesus’ death in light of both his life and teaching, as well as the wider purposes of God. There is a

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 6.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 7.

²⁵² Ibid., 186.

²⁵³ Ibid., 174.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 179.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 175.

general concern that however specifically Christ's work is understood it must be understood in a way that does not divorce salvation from ethics, particularly social ethics. To this end many of the authors critique traditional penal substitution for how it abstracts salvation from this-worldly living. This aspect of their work will be more fully explored in the chapter on discipleship ecclesiology.

In attempting to keep together salvation and ethics, and Jesus' death and Jesus' life, many of the authors articulate two aspects of Christ's work often marginalized. They point first and foremost to Christ's role as initiator/witness/bearer of the kingdom of God. Jesus' main mission was not to atone for sins but to proclaim and enact the reign of God. Second, they show that Jesus' sought to form a people who would continue this mission after him, the new covenant people known as the church. How these authors understand this second aspect of Christ's work will be explored in the next chapter.

The nature of sin, judgment and guilt is one area that is, surprisingly, ignored by some authors and given very different responses to by others. Driver, Baker and Green do not spend much time on these topics. Weaver focuses on the powers and evil, but not much on sin, guilt and judgment. Finger focuses on the paradoxes of judgment and powers. Kraus focuses on the cross's effect on shame and guilt. Belousek focuses on the removal of retributive judgment from sin. Reesor-Taylor looks at the distinction between restitution and punishment, the social nature of sin and the possibility of punishment's legitimacy. Most of these understandings are incompatible. It seems significant that whereas all these authors have a near convergence on the ultimate end of Christ's work there is at best no convergence

and at worst little reflection on sin, guilt and judgment (with the exception of Rachel Reesor-Taylor who subtly suggests this could actually be a denial of these authors' own complicity in oppression). One reason for this could very well be that sin, guilt and judgment have been so thoroughly connected to a penal substitutionary atonement that in abandoning that model these authors have, to quote the cliché, thrown the baby out with the bath water. This observation will be developed into a substantial critique in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 3

Atonement and Discipleship Ecclesiology

This chapter will bring together the two conversations of this thesis: the church as a community of disciples, and the atoning work of Christ. How have these seven authors articulated their ecclesiologies in light of their atonement models and vice versa? Aside from being two conversations coexisting side by side, these two themes are radically intertwined for these authors and in the end are inseparable. This connection might not be present in traditional atonement theologies, which is precisely the critique provided by many of these authors. Yet as Anabaptist-Mennonite theology has developed, it seems like atonement and ecclesiology are no longer so easily distinguished under separate categories. In the following pages I will describe the specifics of each author's proposals on the relation between these two themes. At the same time this chapter will pay attention to larger patterns emerging from all seven authors and their shared arguments will be identified. This chapter will ask whether there have been new developments in how the church as a community of disciples has been understood just as there have been new developments in atonement theology. Where pertinent, each author's discipleship ecclesiology will be compared to Bender and Yoder's proposals.

John Driver

In the second chapter, Driver's main concerns and his understanding of the variegated New Testament witness to the atonement were explored. It was shown that, amidst the variety of images, Driver perceives several main concerns including the importance of social ethics and the centrality of covenant community for atonement explanations. This chapter deals more with Driver's ethical critique of inherited atonement models. Driver argues that "[t]raditional Western Christianity has been characterized by an overriding concern for understanding the work of Christ in terms of appeasing the wrath of God."²⁵⁶ The problem with this, he argues, is that it leaves the key theme of "the creation a new messianic community" to marginal reform movements. This is not to say that Jesus' "vicarious expiatory suffering" is not important, only that the tradition has failed to grasp its "integral relationship . . . with the creation of a concrete new reality in which the rule of God takes a radically new social shape, in which lordship is servanthood."²⁵⁷ This is reminiscent of Bender's comment that Jesus' sin-bearing was "marvelous and wholly necessary" but inadequate by itself.

For Driver, concerns about "peace and justice are rooted in the atoning work of Christ and are therefore integral to the gospel." This concern is expressed in nonresistance, not only as "denominational distinctive [or] optional doctrine . . . espoused by a few minority groups or heroic individuals" but as an essential aspect of discipleship.²⁵⁸ Connecting the atonement to discipleship leads Driver to assert that "the cross of Christ is the essential organizing center from which the kingdom

²⁵⁶ Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 94.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 249.

ethics emerge.”²⁵⁹ Once again this concern for nonresistance, peace and justice bear striking similarity to Bender and Yoder’s work.

Furthermore, a full understanding of the work of Christ would lead to the integration of, rather than the division between, “justification and sanctification, of evangelism and nurture.”²⁶⁰ In saying this, Driver suggests that becoming holy/following Christ is separated from evangelism/justification precisely because of how the atonement has been misconstrued. Just as Jesus’ witness led to his death, so the witness of his followers will risk being killed for now “to evangelize is to become a martyr.”²⁶¹ The problem with the aforementioned divisions is that Christ’s work has become “perceived as an abstract ‘saving’ transaction” which then allows for “sinful and violent people and fallen structures to remain substantially unchanged.”²⁶² Note here, as elsewhere,²⁶³ Driver is concerned to establish an understanding of atonement that requires both people and social structures to change, and both to move from ways of violence to ways of nonviolence. For Driver “the literal ethical components” of Christ’s work “have gradually atrophied” and have been replaced with a greater emphasis on the aspects of sacrifice and expiation, understood transcendentally leaving “admittedly un-Christlike people” to benefit from Christ’s “saving death.”²⁶⁴

Driver’s concerns here are both similar to and dissimilar from Bender and Yoder’s engagement with atonement from the perspective of their discipleship

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 252.

²⁶² Ibid., 30.

²⁶³ Ibid., 31.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

ecclesiologies. Both Bender and Yoder critiqued substitutionary atonement in its alleged exclusion of concerns about transformation, community and discipleship, but, importantly, not in and of itself. Driver is moving in a different direction where he critiques substitutionary atonement in and of itself. For Driver it is not that substitutionary atonement *can* exclude the community of disciples (as in Bender and Yoder), but that it *does* exclude by its very nature.

Driver goes on to say that the peace that Christ establishes is “first of all, a social event.” That is to say, the peace that Christ brings is not an individual’s peace with God, although it is secondarily that. It is first of all an “ecclesial reality.”²⁶⁵ The “concrete barrier . . . removed by the death of Christ is the one which separated human groups from each other. Subsequently, both are reconciled to God.”²⁶⁶ He goes further and, mirroring what he argued concerning the covenanted community as the context for understanding the atonement, suggests that “all of the principal New Testament images for understanding the work of Christ converge [on it, on covenanted community]. *Peoplehood under God’s reign is the organizing center around which all of these images rotate.*”²⁶⁷ That is to say that all the principal images that were explored in the previous chapter, while being diverse, are united by their connection to themes of peoplehood. The creation of this community is not “coincidental, nor is it a secondary result of the saving work of Christ”; rather “the creation of a new humanity in which personal, social and economic differences are all overcome in reconciliation is a *primary and direct result* of the death and

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 219.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 220.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 222.

resurrection of God's Messiah."²⁶⁸ This is true even if "exactly how the sacrificial death of Christ serves to create a reconciled new humanity is not specifically stated."²⁶⁹ This is reminiscent of Yoder who argued in several different essays that the primary work of God was in the creation of a people.

C. Norman Kraus

Kraus includes the community of disciples at the very foundation of his Christology. He argues that in seeking to understand "Jesus' person and work" one should never use "categories which are exclusive of disciples' participation in his life and mission."²⁷⁰ Otherwise stated, the involvement of the disciples in Jesus' life and mission is so significant that the very basic doctrinal categories of Christology need to be rearranged in order to make the community of disciples intrinsic to any and all accounts of who Jesus is and what he did.

Kraus believes that the dimming of discipleship in traditional Christianity is related to the blunting of Jesus' kingdom mission in Christology. Just as "the kingly aspect of Christ's earthly mission was muted, so his effective lordship for everyday life in the world was blunted." Christ's authority first was limited to an "individual's private life" and then reduced even further to the realm of intention (as opposed to action).²⁷¹ This concern about Christ's ongoing lordship was seen already in both Bender and Yoder.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 229. Emphasis mine.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 222.

²⁷⁰ Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 59.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 129.

Kraus sees the Anabaptist tradition as an antidote to the missing discipleship element in previous articulations of “Christ’s person and work.” He sees in Anabaptism an understanding of salvation as a “genuine possibility of a new life under the lordship of Christ” and seeks to explicate and develop this understanding further.²⁷² Jesus, in some way, has created this genuine new possibility. The heart of this is an “emphasis on faith as a living relationship and works as simply the product of regeneration.”²⁷³ Kraus suggests a contemporary way of articulating this heart is to conceptualize it as “solidarity of *koinonia* with Christ . . . [where] solidarity with Christ in the experience of grace [acts] as the stimulus to ethical response.” Being saved is thus “participation or sharing in the life and death of Christ.”²⁷⁴

Kraus breaks down this solidarity into three constituent elements. First, disciples receive the Spirit or “what might be called the *attitude* of Christ.” Second, it includes discipleship, or the “adoption of his *lifestyle*.” Finally, it means “participation in his *mission*.”²⁷⁵ It is in his explanation of these last two elements, of lifestyle and mission, that Kraus develops his own unique contribution to an Anabaptist understanding of discipleship.

He first argues that discipleship is about *style*. This is not a “new primitivism which calls for literal imitation.” Rather, the style of Christ is about expressing “taking up the cross” in new and different situations and cultural contexts.²⁷⁶ The style of discipleship incorporates the “new commandment to love as Christ has

²⁷² Ibid., 173.

²⁷³ Ibid., 236.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 236.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 239. Emphasis original.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 241.

loved and to serve one another as he served.”²⁷⁷ This understanding of style (as opposed to literal imitation) is reminiscent of Bender who talked about the development potential of discipleship, giving the example of the rejection of slavery which was rejected out of the organic logic of discipleship (as opposed to originally and explicitly rejected).

This discipleship-as-style is also connected to ecclesial reality that results from the work of Christ. The body of Christ is a “new social body characterized by a new order of relationships in which . . . neither the taboos of Jewish law or pagan religious practices . . . any longer define human relationships.”²⁷⁸ Christ’s work “on the cross was precisely to reconcile the hostile factions of world society to God and to each other, thus creating one ‘new humanity.’”²⁷⁹ Kraus argues that Protestant soteriology has failed to recognize that this “changed pattern of relationships is an essential part of the gospel of salvation itself.”²⁸⁰ This failure of recognition is rooted in missing Jesus’ primary mission, which was “to inaugurate a new social-spiritual order of human relationships under the authority of God.”²⁸¹

Kraus maintains that disciples of Jesus are also to continue in his mission. Sharing in this mission means “calling all humankind” to become disciples of Christ. This includes, but is not limited to, verbal proclamation of the gospel.²⁸² Sharing in his mission also means a kind of nonconformity to the world. Again, this is not primitivist or literal imitation but a contextual adoption of Jesus’ style for present

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 240.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 241.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid., 243.

circumstances. He suggests that examples in the twentieth century of this kind of nonconformity include those Christians who suffered in their refusal to cooperate with war or with racism.²⁸³ Kraus implies that if people are to continue to be disciples of Christ, these kinds of creative appropriations of Jesus' style will continue to appear within Church history.

This concept is striking. Where as for Bender and Driver discipleship was a matter of imitation Kraus goes beyond this and seems to be following more of Yoder's development which suggested that "without the cross of the church, the cross of Christ." In other words, the efficacy of the cross is not uniquely in Jesus' cross but is, somehow, the cross of the church. To Kraus, Christ's main mission is inaugurating this new socio-spiritual pattern and Christ's disciples not only conform themselves to this pattern but take an active role in spreading it. This should not be missed and an uncareful reading could confuse this for a kind of pelagianism. However, the idea is much more nuanced than that.

As with Yoder and Driver, it seems that Kraus puts the community of disciples at the heart of his Christology because of his understanding of Christ's saving work. The end of this work was the generation of a new "socio-spiritual pattern,²⁸⁴" as Kraus puts it, where humans being are reconciled to each other and to God. Christ's role in this new pattern is that of initiator, the first to introduce a pattern of servant relationships. Traditional Christology misses this primary work entirely because it misunderstands the nature of salvation.

²⁸³ Ibid., 244.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 140.

As will be seen in the next chapter, Kraus has extensive reflections on how the cross of Christ saves human beings from the realities of guilt and shame. However, he does not connect very closely how dealing with guilt and shame relates to the kind of church of disciples explored in this section. Repentance and reconciliation of some kind is implied, but how this is related to the kingdom-bringing work of Christ and participation of his disciples is not really dealt with.

Thomas N. Finger

In his *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* Finger presents his own discipleship ecclesiology in light of both contemporary Anabaptist discussions on the topic and his own understanding of the work of Christ. Most important for present purposes is understanding how Finger understands the church in light of the “struggle” of discipleship. This understanding of discipleship as “struggle” is in turn connected to his understanding of Christ’s victory over the powers and Christ’s role as bestower of divinization. Christ’s victory was not only a conflict with the powers, but it opened up the possibility that human beings could be transformed, through a process rather than an instantaneous event. Thus discipleship is a “struggle” because divinization is a process, a way opened up by Christ but not an imposed, all-at-once transformation. Likewise, this understanding also shapes how the Anabaptist tradition of church discipline and accountability is appropriated.

Finger explores discipleship but attempts to connect the language of discipleship to the language of *new creation*. The former language has been appropriated, in his view, in a way that suggests discipleship is merely an “outward,

human, social-ethical activity” which underplays “inward, divine and ecclesial reality.” He explains that the language of new creation instead points to “the totality of God’s transforming work.”²⁸⁵ The life of a Christian involves both “outer and inner participation in Jesus’ way . . . within a community entered through inner (Spirit) and outer (water) baptism, nurtured through the Spirit by Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper.”²⁸⁶ The presence of the Spirit means discipleship is not something static but a reality of growth. There will be times when “people’s actions conflict with Jesus’ way.”²⁸⁷ The particularly conflicted action should be seen as a sign, not of the person’s failure or infidelity, but the fact that discipleship involves struggle and growth in which failure will, on occasion, happen. Finger does not directly articulate it in this way, but he seems to be suggesting that if discipleship is indeed an “outward, human” activity then moral failure is simply moral failure. But if indeed there is a deeper spiritual struggle happening beneath surface appearances, then instances of failure can be seen in light of larger direction, whether moving towards or away from Christlikeness.

The path of discipleship is a “genuine struggle” which occasions the need for “companionship and teaching and facilitating growth.”²⁸⁸ This is where the Church becomes important. The church can be the site of journeying together in this path of discipleship. This journey together requires accountability, just as the Anabaptist tradition has so often stressed. Finger sees this as where Anabaptists can “best contribute to theology” by “gently insisting that true community simply does involve

²⁸⁵ Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 222.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

commitments, limitations and accountability.”²⁸⁹ The new creation that Jesus brings, which churches have a role in extending, will hardly be extended (and the church communities themselves will hardly survive), “unless they themselves are true communities, expressing clear identities and united by deep commitments.”²⁹⁰ There is something about church discipline, as Finger sees it, which is necessary to the “genuine struggle” of discipleship and participating in the divinization which Christ brought.

Finger is unique here in his connections between the work of Christ, the role of the Spirit and the church as a community of disciples. He is in line here with both Bender and Yoder who connect quite closely the “spiritual resources,” as Yoder calls it, needed and the community of disciples. Driver, Baker, Green, Weaver and Reesor-Taylor do not include the Spirit within their proposals. Kraus and Belousek do, but they do not connect how the Holy Spirit is related to the work of Christ. Finger is alone in connecting these three.

Mark Baker & Joel B. Green

For Baker and Green the corporate discipleship of the Church is an essential aspect of Christ’s atoning work. As was pointed out in a previous chapter for them “the church’s discipleship” is one of three key stories, along with Jesus’ own life and the history of Israel, that are necessary for understanding the significance of his death.²⁹¹ Discipleship was also the second coordinate that the two authors identify

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 233.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 31.

as key to any and all atonement models. Although they do not have any sustained discussion on the meaning of discipleship, they do give hints at what they see as important through their critique of substitutionary atonement, especially its tendency to abstract from historical, day-to-day reality. They also talk about the meaning of discipleship in their critique of improper uses of the cross for discipleship in the past. Finally, they note that the cross and discipleship must never be individualized and the corporate nature of salvation must be kept perennially in mind.

Like many authors surveyed in this chapter, Baker and Green argue that substitutionary atonement implicitly excludes discipleship. They ask “if Jesus has deflected onto himself the divine wrath meant for us, if on this basis we have been made the objects of a legal (penal) transaction whereby we are declared not guilty, what basis remains for moral behaviour? What is the role of salvation understood as sanctification?”²⁹² If salvation is merely a declaration of forgiveness based upon another taking deserved punishment, what role would ethics have to play? Once again this reflects Bender’s warning that when “Christ becomes *only* the sinbearer” theology is in danger of diminishing the importance of Christ’s lordship as well as Yoder’s insistence that Jesus’ sacrifice must not exclude his sovereignty. Yet Baker and Green’s argument differs from both Bender and Yoder like Driver’s argument differed. While Bender and Yoder critiqued substitutionary atonement for its exclusionary tendencies, these authors (Baker, Green and Driver) suggest that these

²⁹² Ibid., 48.

tendencies are integral to substitutionary accounts and thus new atonement accounts must be attempted.

The authors also suggest that penal substitution, in picturing salvation as a divine transaction, necessarily abstracts salvation from real world concerns. They argue that “describing the atonement as a legal transaction within the Godhead removes it from the historical world in which we live and leaves it unconnected to personal and social reconciliation.”²⁹³ Furthermore, in this model a person can be saved “without experiencing a fundamental reorientation of his or her life.”²⁹⁴ They ask what significance Jesus’ death has in this scheme for “how we relate to one another inside or outside of the church or in larger, social-ethical issues.” That such an important part of Christian faith as the cross might “have little or nothing to say about racial reconciliation . . . or issues of wealth and poverty, or our relationship to the cosmos, is itself startling and ought to give us pause.”²⁹⁵ Here in these short critiques Baker and Green begin to sketch a picture of the kind of discipleship an authentic model of atonement will necessarily include. It is a kind of discipleship that embraces a fundamental reorientation of an individual’s life, one which impacts the historical world, one that leads to personal, social and racial reconciliation and one that touches on issues of wealth, poverty and other social-ethical issues. This focus on political and social ethics has much similarity to the proposals found in Driver and Kraus. This critique of atonement as “abstract transaction” is also found in Driver, Weaver and others.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

If this is the picture of the kind of discipleship atonement models should produce, Baker and Green also explore the unfaithfulness atonement models have in the past justified. They argue that “among those who are the bearers of power and privilege in particular social contexts, the cross is sometimes deployed as a model for others.” In these situations marginalized people are “urged to welcome the decay of their lives or communities, and the abused, harassed and ill-used are encouraged to submit quietly, for in the way they can ‘be like Jesus.’”²⁹⁶ Thus, whereas in some situations the cross has been made irrelevant to social ethics, in other situations the cross has been used ideologically in order to oppress people. An atonement model faithful to the New Testament witness would avoid both. This is a newer critique in these atonement theologies and it will be developed more in depth in Weaver and Reesor-Taylor.

Baker and Green also insist on the corporate nature of salvation. This aspect of “the saving significance of Jesus’ death needs to be made plain.”²⁹⁷ The main “orientation” of salvation in the Scriptures is the salvation of “the people of God, not simply the salvation of individuals.” It is a “modern tendency to separate the religious and political,” which is the reason why so much soteriology is individualistic rather than corporate. It is anachronistic, particularly in light of Second Temple Judaism, to separate “forgiveness of sins” and “restoration of the people.” Jesus “could not have aimed to renew Israel without raising the issue of how forgiveness was to be gained.”²⁹⁸ This emphasis on the corporate nature of

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

salvation plays into their critique of Abelard for whom “the community-forming nature of Christ’s work” is not integral to his understanding of the atonement.²⁹⁹ As with discipleship, Baker and Green do not explore this community-forming nature in any more detail, apart from noting its central importance in the saving work of the cross. This focus on peoplehood has already been seen in Driver and Kraus and will be seen in Weaver and Belousek.

J. Denny Weaver

As illustrated by the title of his earlier book, Weaver’s ultimate concern is primarily to keep salvation ethical. He follows those theologians (some of whom who have been explored in this thesis) who “argue that atonement formulas devoid of ethics actually contribute to sinful living since they provide a means to maintain a proper legal status before God without speaking about transformed life under the rule of God.”³⁰⁰ He further follows liberationist critiques of Anselm whom he sees as posing an atonement model which, in its lack of “ethical dimensions in the historical arena,” allows for accommodation of a whole host of social ills.³⁰¹ Weaver furthers this by claiming that Anselm does not include “the teachings and example of Jesus” in a way in which they are “integral to [his] atoning work.”³⁰²

Weaver also seeks to place ecclesiology at the heart of the atonement. For him “the church was the earthly instrument that continued Jesus’ mission of making

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 164.

³⁰⁰ Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 99.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 5.

³⁰² Ibid., 117.

visible the reign of God.”³⁰³ If Jesus came to bring the reign of God in history then it makes sense that, after Jesus, there must be other human beings to continue witnessing to and participating in God’s reign. The church is “the social structure created by Jesus and extended by his followers” and is an alternative to the social structures that manifest the non-reign of God.³⁰⁴ The “church versus empire” model is the historical translation of what is cosmically “God’s reign versus the reign of evil.”³⁰⁵ Weaver’s insistence that the Church continues Jesus’ mission is similar to both Kraus and Yoder’s insistence that discipleship is not just imitation but participation in Christ’s mission. Does this mean for Weaver that discipleship has some kind of redemptive value? His categorical ambiguity around whether Christ actually changed reality or simply made it visible hinders readers from fully answering the question.

Weaver’s insistence that these confronting, conflicting reigns are at the heart of the work of Christ makes sense of the dichotomies that permeate *The Nonviolent Atonement*. The language of these dichotomies seem to be rather directly taken out of Weaver’s engagement with the liberationist critiques of Black, Feminist and Womanist theologians. They also help understand the discipleship ecclesiology he ties to Narrative Christus Victor. The four dichotomies that he repetitively invokes include inside or outside history, abstract or concrete, accommodating versus confronting and active versus passive. Each of these dichotomies can be seen as

³⁰³ Ibid., 101.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 107.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 115.

building upon and implying the other three, and in turn help clarify the reality of the confronting, conflicting reigns so important to his proposal.

His first dichotomy suggests that there is a world of difference between atonement imagery that hopes for a salvation outside of history (presumably either after death or after the return of Christ) and atonement imagery that hopes for salvation in history, where God's reign is available proleptically. This means that the powers, such as slavery, racism or domestic violence which have perpetuated historical evils, are arenas for transformation by the reign of God released in Jesus' resurrection. For "it is precisely in the historical world that we discuss how to live in ways shaped by the reign of God."³⁰⁶ His second dichotomy, between an abstract and concrete ethics, is essentially the same as the first suggesting that atonement models can abstract, or take out of history, the work of Christ. A preoccupation with the concrete is seen as important given the dangers of abstraction. This means that the church seeking to follow Christ will do so in the historical arena through concrete acts of faithfulness in harmony with its founder. This concern for a concrete, historical ethic is much in line with the political and social ethical concerns of all the writers already explored in this chapter.

The third dichotomy suggests either that the church is confronting the social order/empire or is accommodating to it. This is "structures confronting structures," not individuals confronting individuals, although "structures clearly include individuals."³⁰⁷ Within this dichotomy Weaver suggests that there is no neutral territory or a space where church coexists with empire without either confrontation

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 100.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 115.

or accommodation. Weaver lists concrete acts of Jesus that he sees as means of confrontation that the Church can take up in similar ways.³⁰⁸ He opposed this to accommodations of slavery, racism³⁰⁹, sexism and the sword.³¹⁰ These accommodations happen because Christians have been able to claim salvation outside of history and outside of ethics. They have done so traditionally by means of the penal substitutionary death of Christ.

The fourth dichotomy that Weaver works within, between active resistance and passive submission, develops both out of his concern for active nonviolence and his dialogue with Feminist and Womanist critiques of idealized passive suffering. The cross could be read as a passive suffering, a call to not resist but acquiesce to injustice, violence and domestic abuse. Yet, Weaver insists, “Jesus’ mission had a life-giving purpose . . . rather than holding up an image of passive submission to suffering, this mission was a model of active resistance.”³¹¹ He emphasizes this partially to defend nonviolence that has often been considered as a passive option. The goals of God’s reign “are not accomplished by violence” but this rejection of violence “ought not to be interpreted as passivity.”³¹² As with the dichotomy between confrontation and accommodation, here Weaver does not give up any neutral territory, any third space, between active resistance and passive submission. It is either one or the other.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 39.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 5.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹¹ Ibid., 161.

³¹² Ibid., 37.

The dichotomy between accommodation and confrontation suggests a church with relative power, not an oppressed church, whereas the dichotomy between active resistance and passive submission suggests a church with little power, an oppressed church. For the church that might not be oppressed, the choice that the conflicting reigns presents is whether there will be accommodation to an oppressing social order or confrontation with it. The options available to the oppressed church are analogous, if different: either passively accept the inflicted suffering or actively, nonviolently resist it.

What is original in Weaver's discipleship ecclesiology is his presenting different ways of being faithful, different discipleships. A person's "station in life" means that they are complicit "in different ways in sin against Jesus and the reign of God." For those who are in "dominant categories [they] clearly shared in oppression." On the other hand those who are "oppressed persons participate in another way" in passively submitting to their own violation.³¹³ For the dominant faithfulness means "to confront the inherited and systemic evils." For the oppressed it issues the challenge "to follow Jesus in resisting that which binds them."³¹⁴ These are different ways, necessarily so, of following the same Lord.

Weaver builds upon Womanist understandings of the cross and suffering in presenting a discipleship of the oppressed. Following Jesus "may indeed be costly; it may indeed entail suffering and death. But that suffering is no longer suffering that is salvific in and of itself . . . it is suffering that is the result of opposing evil. This

³¹³ Ibid., 315.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 319.

suffering is an *ethic of risk*.”³¹⁵ He adopts this language of risk, and it helpfully and critically illumines for his readers both his understanding of Christ’s mission and the mission of his followers. This *ethic of risk* understanding fits well with Yoder’s explanation of the cross as being “the cost of obedience in the midst of a rebellious world.”

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek

In emphasizing that Jesus’ death was representative rather than substitutionary, Belousek intentionally leaves room in Jesus’ action for the activity of his followers. In fact, representation is essential to understand that “baptized community continues participating in the death of Jesus through its suffering with and for others.”³¹⁶ Belousek explores different facets of this participation, including real world transformation, the importance of confrontation, the role of the church community in discipleship formation, the mission of this community in the world and how the cross impacts concrete issues of justice and peace.

Belousek makes the point that the salvation Jesus achieves has “earthly, social significance.” The work of Christ is a peacemaking that “entails and effects, not only the personal salvation of souls for eternity in heaven, but also the social reconciliation of peoples on earth in history.”³¹⁷ God’s work in Christ is a “real-world transforming event, changing a situation of actual social division, hostility, conflict,

³¹⁵ Ibid., 213. Emphasis mine.

³¹⁶ Belousek, *Atonement, Justice and Peace*, 320.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 511.

alienation and despair . . . into a reality of unity, peace, friendship and hope.”³¹⁸

These comments indicate that Belousek joins the preponderance of Anabaptist-Mennonite revisioning of atonement where the concrete social realities of history have a bearing on how the cross of Christ is articulated and understood. This can be seen throughout in the work of Driver, Kraus, Baker, Green and Weaver and probably has some of its early roots in Yoder’s work.

Building on this “real world” perspective, Belousek emphasizes that “cruciform peacemaking must *confront* the real-world ‘rulers and authorities’ that wield powers of violence.” This confrontation “will inevitably provoke *conflict* with those who resist the coming of God’s kingdom and thus will be *costly* to the peacemaker who seeks God’s kingdom.”³¹⁹ So following Christ in the real world will be costly as confrontation with the powers will produce conflict. Belousek differentiates this nonviolent confrontation with the violence that Augustine allowed. Augustine allows “desiring peace in one’s heart while wielding the sword with one’s hands.” This is not true discipleship “because it refuses to bear in one’s own body the cost of making peace and instead forces the enemy to pay the price of peace with his blood.”³²⁰ Thus true following after Christ will include a willingness to bear the cost in one’s own body. Belousek’s emphasis on confrontation complements Weaver’s emphasis on confrontation and can be seen as a result of the Mennonite shift in understanding from nonresistance to active nonviolence.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 522.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 526. Italics original.

³²⁰ Ibid., 540.

Bearing the cost in such a way is difficult without the necessary virtues, and these are “not possible apart from a community of faith conformed to the pattern of cross-and-resurrection, a community that cultivates such peaceable habits of character in its daily practice.”³²¹ In his subsequent discussion Belousek seems to be saying not that the cross creates community but that discipleship which seeks to imitate the cross of Christ needs, in concrete and practical ways, community.³²² He goes so far as to say that when Jesus issues the command to discipleship, this command is “addressed, not to isolated individuals but to individuals incorporated into a discipleship community.”³²³ Through the Holy Spirit God renders “the church capable of doing corporately what no one . . . is able to do individually.”³²⁴ The role of the Holy Spirit seems to play an essential role in forming the Church so it is rather surprising that Belousek only mentions her here.

Belousek also sees the Church “as part of God’s purpose of redemption.”³²⁵ God’s purpose for world redemption, first at work in Jesus, “continues in and through the mission of the church.”³²⁶ This participatory aspect has already been seen in Yoder, Kraus and Weaver. The church is redeemed by Christ, so that like Christ, it “also might be commissioned into service for God’s purpose following Christ’s cruciform example.”³²⁷ Just as God’s redemptive purpose continues to be worked through the Church so also “God’s reconciling work . . . is intended to

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 568.

³²² *Ibid.*, 572ff.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 572.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 608.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 611.

continue in and through the Church.”³²⁸ This too follows from the distinction between substitution and representation. In substitution, since Christ takes humanity’s place exclusively he exclusively serves God’s purpose of world redemption and reconciliation. In representation, Christ dies inclusive of humanity, thus including humanity in God’s redemptive work.³²⁹

Since the mission of the Church includes concrete, cruciform acts of justice doing and peacemaking, Belousek names examples of these to show how the message of the cross would impact the Church’s engagement. He includes capital punishment, divisions between people and inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts as examples. For the issue of capital punishment Belousek argues that “God has brought the death penalty to a final end through the cross of Christ—indeed, that God has put the death penalty itself to death on the cross.”³³⁰ The death penalty is a supreme instance of retributive violence and, since God has done away with retribution in the cross, any real argument for death penalty from a theological perspective is thus nullified.

Belousek makes a similar argument when it comes to human division. Division is destroyed because in the cross “God makes war . . . on the very conditions that have engendered the state of war—division and hostility.”³³¹ Just as God in Christ did not condemn sinners but sin on the cross so in this instance God does not make war against humanity but against the vision that causes the war.³³² Here what

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 612.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 613.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 490.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 542.

³³² *Ibid.*, 543

makes for peace is “Jesus’ own non-retaliatory, reconciliatory response to the body-breaking, blood-shedding violence committed against himself that makes peace.”³³³

If there ever was a real reason for division and enmity, humanity’s killing of God would be it. However, in the resurrection God overcomes this enmity through his offer of forgiveness in Jesus.³³⁴

A final example is Belousek’s discussion on the impact of the cross on inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict. For Belousek the cross “reveals that at the heart of inter-ethnic/inter-religious conflict raging throughout history is hostility rooted in identity.”³³⁵ Modern perspectives fail to get at the heart of these conflicts because they often understand this conflict to be rooted in interest. Identity is different from interest since it “motivates self-sacrifice” and can cut “across class lines.”³³⁶ Identity-fuelled conflict is both self-justifying and other-exclusive in definition. That is to say conflict is rooted in “identity purged of the other.”³³⁷ What the cross of Christ reveals is the possibility of identity that is open or hospitable to others: “from identity purged of the Other to identity embracing the Other.”³³⁸ Belousek states that the cross is superior to modern reasoning in revealing that identity is a cause of violent conflict.³³⁹ God responds to this reality by creating the Church, a body of Jews and Gentiles who maintain an identity that is open to the other in Christ.³⁴⁰

³³³ Ibid., 547.

³³⁴ Ibid., 548.

³³⁵ Ibid., 575.

³³⁶ Ibid., 577.

³³⁷ Ibid., 575.

³³⁸ Ibid., 585.

³³⁹ Ibid., 582.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 585.

Rachel Reesor-Taylor

Reesor-Taylor, following much of the same impulse of the atonement theology already discussed, attempts to articulate an atonement model that makes the community of disciples integral to the work of Christ. She aims to rehabilitate Anselmian satisfaction atonement for this task. To this end she seeks to emphasize how Anselm presupposed both the participation and transformation of discipleship in his understanding of the atonement. She argues that for Anselm the restorative work of Christ comes through human participation in a sacrifice that makes the necessary satisfaction.³⁴¹

For Anselm it was part of God's "ultimate justice" to provide a way of atonement that would include the participation of its beneficiaries. Jesus' sacrifice, his satisfaction and obedience, was not made "*so we do not have to do it*. It was not external to humanity."³⁴² It would not have been in keeping with God's mercy to have "paid the debt without human involvement, or to have simply overlooked the debt."³⁴³ This is because it is a matter of human dignity (Reesor-Taylor's word) and happiness (Anselm's word) to be able to restore or pay back what is owed. Medieval penitential language called this compunction. Reesor-Taylor summarizes Anselm's thoughts: "If a person does not repay what he owes . . . he will not be happy, and if he does not desire to do so, he will be a wrong-doer."³⁴⁴ God, merciful as he is, wants people to be happy so would not provide a means of atonement that human beings could not participate in. This is why God did this work in Christ, as a human being.

³⁴¹ Rachel Reesor-Taylor, *Cur Deus Homo for a Peace Theology*, 107.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 153.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

Human participation in the atonement is sacramental.³⁴⁵ Through the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, “human beings are united to [Jesus’] humanity.”³⁴⁶ Yet this sacramental participation is not merely ritualistic, as certain Protestant misunderstanding might suggest. It includes the ethical. Reesor-Taylor follows George Williams who explains that, since the Eucharist is connected to penance, participation in the sacrament necessarily implies that one actively attempt to follow Christ in daily life (despite the different ways different ages have imagined this following).³⁴⁷ Reesor-Taylor summarizes it in this way: “receiving the body and blood of Christ aright is linked to a life of obedience, repentance and confession of sin.”³⁴⁸ Anselm also insists elsewhere that besides participation in the Eucharist there is also the importance of imitating Christ.³⁴⁹

Yet this discipleship is a matter of transformation, not just imitation. Reesor-Taylor does not engage this line of thinking too far but does insist that in Anselm’s account “discipleship . . . is not just following a leader. It is a matter of being incorporated in Christ and so being enabled to follow.”³⁵⁰ Throughout *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm is “concerned with the transformation of life, or the restoration of humanity and the whole creation—and not simply with a *declaration of justification*.”³⁵¹ This kind of transformation is linked quite closely with Anselm’s understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice. The transformation that occurs is mystical

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 153.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 155.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 157.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 156.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 215.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 169.

and sacramental in nature and in means but is clearly distinct from a juridical declaration of forgiveness or an imputed righteousness.

Reesor-Taylor's aim is to argue that Anselm is compatible with Peace Theology. Here she suggests that Anselm in his Catholic, sacramental context can be seen as compatible with the discipleship ecclesiology of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. However, she does not explore this tradition's different understanding of the sacraments and how this might impact peace theology's reception of Anselm's account. She also does not explore the charge made by some Mennonite theologians that although Anselm includes imitating Christ there is no reference to Jesus' actual life and teaching in his theology, specifically his nonviolence. Perhaps even if there are elements of Anselm's theology that are compatible, his overall framework needs to be re-contextualized. Denny Weaver's constructive appropriation of Christus Victor in his Narrative Christus Victor could serve as a useful model here. How would a *Narrative Satisfaction* differ exactly? That remains to be seen.

Summary

All seven authors maintain that a proper account of the work of Christ will by necessity include the active participation of his followers. All except Rachel Reesor-Taylor build this argument against inherited substitutionary accounts of the atonement and even Reesor-Taylor rereads Anselm in order to highlight the participation of disciples in his account. Almost all the authors argue that substitution logically excludes participation and so should be set aside as an atonement model. All would agree with Bender's chiding of a soteriology where

“Christ becomes *only* the sinbearer.” On top of this most argue that substitution also excludes transformation in historical, daily existence. Although they say it with different emphasis and nuance, all of the authors argue that discipleship entails not only following but experiencing some kind of moral transformation. Finger is quite clear that this transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit; Kraus and Belousek do include the Spirit in their treatments but they do somewhat vaguely and the other authors exclude her entirely. Some of the authors maintain that this discipleship is not literal imitation but creative re-appropriation of Jesus’ style for new and ever-changing contexts.

Many of these authors do not dwell simply upon individual discipleship but seek to show the importance of the church, of the community of disciples, for the work of Christ. As Driver put it, these two, the church and the work of Christ, have an “integral relationship.” The making of a new humanity is the “primary and direct result” of what Christ did, language almost directly taken from Yoder. Many of the later authors echo this very sentiment. Some even say that the church is a direct necessity to the practice of discipleship (as opposed to the church arising out of practices of discipleship it is its necessary context). Both Finger and Belousek argue that, quite practically, the demands of discipleship cannot be met without communal support. Yoder and Bender make the same argument, save for them the Holy Spirit is in the background more explicitly.

A major theme related to but significantly distinct from discipleship ecclesiology that emerges from many of these authors is the impact of the cross on social ethics. Baker and Green argue that it should “give us pause” that traditional

atonement accounts have nothing to say about economic injustice or racial reconciliation.³⁵² Belousek writes his book to construct “an adequate theological bridge” between theologies of the cross and practices of peace and justice.³⁵³ Weaver attempts to sidestep Christendom atonement theologies that justify slavery, racism, sexism and the sword. Driver tells a thoughtful if sobering anecdote about a theology that would compromise with Francisco Franco’s oppression. It is clear that beyond the importance of including the community of disciples into the work of Christ these authors have concrete concerns about how Christology can negatively impact pursuit of peace and justice.

Kraus, writing in light of these concerns, argues that discipleship has dimmed because the kingdom-mission of Christ has been dulled in traditional Christology. Many of the authors make similar statements about Christ’s kingdom work. He came not merely for “salvation of souls” but to effect concrete social reconciliation in history. Although not all of the authors use this same language there seems to be a consensus that Jesus came to bring real, earthly, historical change and not merely abstract, spiritual salvation. Such a spiritualizing of salvation is linked to actual oppression and historical injustice.

Since Jesus’ disciples follow him and participate in his death they also participate in this kingdom-bearing mission. In some of the authors this is unclear but in others, particularly Weaver and Belousek, this is fully developed. The people formed by his death and resurrection continue God’s redeeming work begun in Christ. This includes, as many of the authors emphasize, Christ’s confronting the

³⁵² Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 48.

³⁵³ Belousek, *Atonement, Justice and Peace*, 5.

powers and nonviolently working for justice. As Kraus indicated this participatory aspect destabilizes traditional Christological categories. The church participates in Christ's redeeming work. If this is so, is the phrase "Work of Christ" useful on its own? This advocacy for a participatory account of Christ's cross is reminiscent of Yoder who wrote that the cross of Christ would be "emptied" without the cross of the church. This has interesting implications for the uniqueness of Christ's work that most of the authors insist on, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Anabaptist-Mennonite Atonement Grammars

The second chapter of this thesis looked at how the seven authors broadly articulated the work of Christ. The third chapter looked at how their models informed their understanding of the church as community of disciples. This chapter asks how these authors work within and construct what could be called grammars of atonement. The concept of atonement grammars follows (loosely) the distinction George Lindbeck makes in *The Nature of Doctrine* between second-order and first-order propositions in theology.³⁵⁴ First-order propositions are direct truth claims whereas second-order propositions “regulate truth claims by excluding some and permitting others.”³⁵⁵ Lindbeck also uses the distinction between ontological and intrasystematic truths to describe this dynamic. The former are propositions making claims about reality while the later is about how these claims cohere with each other.³⁵⁶ In other words second-order propositions function grammatically, laying out the rules on how speech operates but not actually being speech. This distinction between grammar and speech is indirectly applicable to the atonement theologies of these seven authors. Some of these authors are concerned with saying something about the atonement whereas others are concerned with the ranges of what can and cannot be said. The latter are defining grammars of atonement that,

³⁵⁴ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 66.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

while not outlining specific models, are constructed in such a way to exclude and permit various ranges of atonement explanations.

This chapter will depart from the structure of the previous two chapters of chronologically surveying the authors and instead put the seven authors into two schools of thought. The first school, including Kraus, Weaver and Reesor-Taylor, are those whose work is more direct in speaking about the atonement. These authors are concerned less about the rules governing the discourse of atonement and more about articulating their understanding of the work of Christ. The second school, including Driver, Finger, and Baker and Green, are more concerned with developing what is called here atonement grammars. These authors seek to show, with different but perhaps complementary arguments, which atonement models can be included and which should be excluded based on biblical, historical and theological arguments. While these later authors seem to be concerned about the character of 'model-thinking' in atonement theology, their work can be framed fruitfully within the category of atonement grammars. The category of atonement grammars can fruitfully work through this suspicion of model-thinking, which will be explored more fully below.

This chapter seeks to make a contribution to Anabaptist-Mennonite theology in showing the strengths and weaknesses of the grammatical approach of the "second school." The strength of the second school lies both in establishing the importance of and the actual grammars of Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theologies. Another strength is that the second school also provides some of the raw material for constructing atonement models. The weakness, in my contention, lies in

an argument common if implicit to the second school that seems to set atonement grammars in opposition to atonement speech. It seems that these authors go beyond developing a grammar that regulates atonement models “by excluding some and permitting others” in suggesting that a grammar is sufficient in and of itself and thus, in terms of atonement models, exclude all and permit none. For the sake of not wanting to say too much they might actually say too little. This chapter explores this curious opposition. Thus Belousek, who is placed here in the second school, is given as an example of an author whose material is robust and unique enough to develop an atonement model but does not do so because of this inherited dichotomy.

First School – Anabaptist-Mennonite Atonement Speech

J. Denny Weaver

When John Driver published *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, Weaver asked in a review why Driver would shy away from synthesizing the New Testament variety into a single atonement model. Weaver suggested that “in fact, that plurality coupled with the theological criteria seems an open, nay irresistible, invitation to try.”³⁵⁷ *The Nonviolent Atonement* can be seen as the fruit of his attempts to respond to this invitation. Weaver will be used here as a paradigmatic example of an author who, while respectful of this “theological criteria,” which is here understood as atonement grammar, attempts to go beyond grammar and say something about the atonement.

³⁵⁷ J. Denny Weaver, review of *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, by John Driver, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 4, no. 3 (1986): 261.

Weaver's concern in *The Nonviolent Atonement* is to remove the salvific efficacy of Jesus' death. This concern is nuanced with his insistence that he is not merely "refurbishing" the moral influence motif. He locates the objective (in the sense of reality-changing beyond just subjective perception) aspect of Christ's work in his resurrection rather than in his death. As he repeats *ad nauseum* Jesus' mission was life-affirming in his witness to the presence of God's reign. As a corollary to this he asserts that Jesus' death was neither willed nor required by God.³⁵⁸ This sets Narrative Christus Victor apart from satisfaction atonement where Jesus death is "irreducibly needed" by God in the economy of salvation.³⁵⁹ Jesus death was not the goal of his mission of presenting God's reign, but it was an inevitable result of what happens when the reign of God confronts the rule of evil. In this way Jesus' death "reveals the nature of the forces of evil that opposed the rule of God."³⁶⁰

Whereas Jesus' death shows evil doing "its worst," it is God's resurrection of Jesus which showed the capacity of God's reign to overcome both death ("the last enemy") and the forces of evil.³⁶¹ While in Narrative Christus Victor it is important for the sinner to be impacted by perceiving the resurrection, it "is no mere refurbishing of moral influence atonement." For in the resurrection "the true balance of power in the universe" is revealed, "whether sinners perceive it or not."³⁶² The resurrection introduced "the eschatological dimension" which "means

³⁵⁸ Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 161.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 47.

the Christian life now, in history... is the beginning of the actualization of the reign of God. It is the inbreaking of a new age.”³⁶³

Weaver clarifies the role of the resurrection in Narrative Christus Victor in conversation with Feminist atonement theology. Interacting with Rita Nakashima Brock’s Christa/Community atonement model, Weaver raises the concern that Brock’s model lacks “an objective character to the work of Christ.”³⁶⁴ In his reading of Brock, “there is nothing about [Jesus’ death and resurrection] that changes the nature of reality in an objective way.”³⁶⁵ Furthermore, Jesus “is one but not the sole representative” of salvation in her model. He contrasts this to his own model which stresses “that the fullness of the reign of God was present in Jesus.”³⁶⁶

Weaver also brings clarity through his interactions with Abelard’s moral influence model. In Abelard, “actual change in the relationship between God and sinful humanity [happens] when human beings perceive Jesus’ identity with them and make a choice to cease their denial of sin.” Until this happens there is no change in the world or in human beings. By contrast with Abelard’s model, in Narrative Christus Victor “the resurrection signifies that the order of the cosmos has been revealed as determined . . . whether or not rebellious human beings recognize it.”³⁶⁷ Thus in these interactions with Brock and Abelard, he both stresses and clarifies

³⁶³ Ibid., 166.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 175.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 176.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 184.

that in his model the resurrection is the location of the unique and objective changes that should accompany an atonement model that has a high Christology.³⁶⁸

In Narrative Christus Victor he emphasizes that God does not need the death of Jesus for the sake of salvation as in other atonement models. Jesus' death was the inevitable result of his mission to make present the reign of God, but it was not the mission itself. He was not born to die. It was Jesus' resurrection that displays the objective aspect of Christ's work, doing what no one else did or could do in opening up the eschatological presence of God's reign. Yet there is some unsorted-out ambivalence in Weaver's book about what this means. Some of the language points to a changed reality, other language suggests that reality was not so much changed but revealed for what it really is. What this ambivalence points to is important not only to clarify what Weaver is trying to communicate with Narrative Christus Victor but also because of his insistence, as seen in his interaction with Brock and Abelard, that Christ's work has to have an *objective side*. If Jesus' resurrection only revealed something that was already the case then it did not accomplish anything for salvation. In the reverse of what will be found in Belousek below, Weaver seems to offer a grammar of atonement that transcends the material of his atonement model.

Despite confusing language his interaction with J. Alexander Sider's critique of the first edition of *The Nonviolent Atonement* demonstrates that, for Weaver, the resurrection reveals something already a reality and does not change reality.³⁶⁹ As Weaver argues "'revealing' means making clear what was already the case but not

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 166. Weaver makes the assertion that his atonement model counters abusive images while maintaining a high Christology, meanwhile charging that much Feminist theology fails on this account.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 45 n48.

yet recognized whereas 'vindicates' indicates a triumph in a struggle where the outcome is doubtful." To suggest that it changes reality would be to mean that God is unequal or in competition with evil. Weaver suggests what is needed is "a theology in which the powers and evil do not have an ontology or existence."³⁷⁰ Although he does not parse this out further, Weaver does suggest that there is a crucial difference between the cosmic and historical realm here, where in the cosmic realm the language of witness is used, in the historical realm the language of confrontation. Building on this assertion it could be posited that revealing language around the resurrection belongs to the cosmic realm, whereas victory language around the resurrection belongs to the historical realm. I suggest that this is not merely an area to be developed within Weaver's theology, but is in fact undeveloped. Given that his whole model hangs on the resurrection to leave this ambivalence as it is has a destabilizing effect on his whole argument.

Jesus' death is not "irreducibly needed" for salvation but Jesus is. Weaver is at pains to insist that Narrative Christus Victor gives an "objective character to the work of Christ." This objective character is located in the resurrection. His insistence that Jesus is "irreducibly needed" for salvation and that there needs to be an "objective character" to the work of Christ is not unique among the authors explored in this chapter. What is unique in Weaver is his "desire to synthesize" the New Testament witness and his refusal to "preserve [the] plurality of images" as they are.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Weaver, review of *Understanding Atonement*, 261..

Rachel Reesor-Taylor

Unlike many of these authors, Reesor-Taylor is engaging with the theology of a historical figure and so does not engage directly in questions about the nature of scripture and doctrine. She does, however, indirectly present an atonement model in the sense that in her discussion of Anselm she answers the question of how Christ, in Weaver's phrase, is "irreducibly needed" for salvation. By rereading Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* in light of recent scholarship on his medieval context Rachel Reesor-Taylor corrects stereotyped understandings of how Anselm envisioned Christ's work of atonement. Rather than a wrathful Father punishing his innocent Son in order to purchase forgiveness for humanity there is God-in-Christ offering his life as a human being to make amends on behalf of other human beings in a way that allows for others to participate in this offering. Such a model insists that atonement must deal not only with the power but also the guilt of sin. Its theology of sin corresponds well with a restorative justice of crime where "since harm is personal, not abstract... it creates obligations to make right, 'reparation ought to be at the centre of justice.'"³⁷² If these obligations are refused by the offending party then punishment is entirely legitimate.³⁷³ Yet punishment is not the goal: restoration is, which is why God came in Christ to offer restitution or make amends on behalf of humanity.

Reesor-Taylor understands that peace theology aims at making "pacifism an integral, central shaping element."³⁷⁴ Combining this emphasis on nonviolence with

³⁷² Reesor-Taylor, "*Cur Deus Homo* for a Peace Theology," 172.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

an assumption that “retribution or punishment is inherently violent” means that many of the authors explored here explicitly reject the “whole notion of punishment as legitimate.”³⁷⁵ Yet she argues that “a Christian commitment to non-violence does not deny *God’s* right to exercise judgment or punishment, and to have the final say, doing what human beings cannot do – even to overcome death and raise people from the dead.”³⁷⁶

This distinction in her atonement theology between satisfaction and punishment, restitution and retribution, would be valuable for a peace theology. It would allow peace theology to talk about both the atonement and final judgment in a way that allows for God’s prerogative of retribution (to use Belousek’s term) without making this God’s goal or a divine necessity. It would also allow atonement theology to deal more adequately with issues of harm, responsibility and guilt in sin. Thus in their proposals both Weaver and Reesor-Taylor answer, in very different ways, how Christ was “irreducibly needed” for salvation.

C. Norman Kraus

How then, Kraus asks, “shall we understand theologically the role of Jesus in [this] formation?”³⁷⁷ Kraus stresses that Jesus’ work was unique and unrepeatable: “in all of this there is no intention to detract from or nullify the ‘once for all’ character of Christ’s work. He has done what no one before or since has done or can

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁷⁷ Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 196.

do.”³⁷⁸ Christ “remains the unique source from which the reconciling influence comes.” He suggests that what must be highlighted is Jesus’ role “as the *one who has initiated the new humanity*.”³⁷⁹ It can be recognized that “Christ’s role was that of *initiator*” once his “continuing authority” as Lord is confessed and “proper credit” is given to “the enabling role of his Holy Spirit.”³⁸⁰

Following from this, Kraus argues, it is theologically improper to assign to Jesus a “qualitatively different mission (vocation)” from his disciples. His work, while unique and once for all, was not qualitatively different from the work his disciples are called to be a part of. In other words, Christ’s primary work as initiator cannot be seen as important unless his present authority and the presence of the Spirit are also acknowledged. The uniqueness of Christ’s work is that he was the first to introduce this pattern of relationship and this style of being. This also suggests a “dynamic in which Christ is the paradigm, exemplar or role model who stimulates, trains and encourages us to share his achievement of the image of God.” Writing at the time of the 1986 Olympics, Kraus suggests that the coach-athlete relationship is an appropriate contemporary metaphor for the work of Christ.³⁸¹

In the categories of this chapter Kraus is laying out both an atonement grammar and going beyond this to say something positive about the work of Christ. In terms of grammar he lays out the constraining rules that Christ’s work must be seen as unique and once for all. He goes beyond grammar when he suggests that within these rules one can speak of Christ’s role as an initiator. Interestingly he

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 242.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 196. Italics original.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 242.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 197.

implies that speaking about Christ's role as initiator will only make sense if the enabling role of the Holy Spirit and Christ's continual lordship are acknowledged and in turn will make sense of that fact that Jesus' has the same qualitative mission as his disciples. Thus in defense of his speaking of Christ's work as initiator he compiles three more constraining rules about speaking about the atonement all three of which are directly related to a discipleship ecclesiology.

As a corollary to his role as initiator, Christ came to destroy human excuse in doing "what we claim could not be done." More precisely, he brought freedom in demonstrating that, contrary to what might be believed about human realities, "one in our condition can keep the true intention of God's law."³⁸² Kraus bases his reading here on Romans 7, and significantly, if implicitly, presents Christ's work not as saving humanity from the consequences of original sin (as in traditional Western soteriologies) but as exposing original sin as an excuse that further perpetuates cycles of sin.

Following his highlighting of Jesus-as-revelation in his broader Christology Kraus claims that the cross and resurrection have a "reciprocal significance" in revealing God. Jesus' death, first of all, "is the disclosure of God's saving love because it is *the cross of the resurrected one.*" Likewise Christ's resurrection "is the act of God's justifying power because it is *the resurrection of the crucified one.*"³⁸³ For Kraus this is significant because it once again highlights that both the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed and the God that Jesus revealed are inseparable from the kind of death Jesus died and what this kind of death signifies in terms of agape love and

³⁸² Ibid., 73.

³⁸³ Ibid., 90.

servanthood. For “the resurrection [was] not simply the reexaltation of the divine Son who temporarily assumed a human role which was not essential to sonship.”³⁸⁴ Rather the resurrection indicates that this humanity, this specific way of being human seen in Jesus, is essentially how Jesus-as-God always is and will be.

Kraus also presents the cross of Christ as a kind of theodicy which has the purpose not of justifying humanity, as traditionally understood, but justifying God “as Creator and Lawgiver.”³⁸⁵ When the holiness and goodness of God is questioned Christians can point to the “love which is most fully displayed in the life and death of Jesus [which while not resolving] all the mystery [brings about] trust in God who does not stand aloof from us in our suffering but rather takes responsibility for our hostility, identifies with us in our suffering and overcomes sin and death.”³⁸⁶ Christ’s life and death display the faithfulness of God in his accompaniment with humanity which, while not at all resolving the problem of human suffering, does serve to elicit human trust in God whose love drove him to the solidarity of crucifixion.

The cross and resurrection are also, in another way, the “final justification of God.”³⁸⁷ Kraus opposes the events surrounding Jesus’ death and resurrection with the image of final judgment and apocalyptic rectification found in other parts of the New Testament and apocryphal literature. God’s final judgment “is not manifested,” Kraus emphatically states, “in the last judgment which punishes lawlessness with violent retribution and rewards righteousness, but in the resurrection which overcomes the consequences of sin,” namely death. The developing theology of

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 148.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 152.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

judgment in the New Testament emphasizes the resurrection as God's final vindication of right and "final defeat of death and the powers." Other images of final judgment are "traces" remaining in the "apocalyptic portions" of the text. This is because this "new approach is not fully developed in the New Testament writings [but] emerges like many other explosive, powerful new ideas."³⁸⁸ Despite what is obviously both a new and potentially significant interpretation of God's judgment and the relationship between God's revelation and sacred text, Kraus does not explore or develop his assertions here in any sustained way. Thus, where as Kraus talks about the work of Christ in ways that go beyond just his death, so he talks about Christ's death in ways that go beyond his work into revealing the very character of God.

Finally, Kraus develops a model of atonement in which Jesus' death responds to both the subjective and objective aspects of both shame and guilt that, he states at the outset, are both objective realities and not simply cultural constructs.³⁸⁹ Shame, when seen as an aspect of sin, has associations with "defilement or uncleanness and it is experienced [subjectively] as a sense of embarrassment or unworthiness in another's presence." Objectively sin-as-shame "is suffered as social disgrace, exclusion, or ridicule which the group projects onto the 'defiled' individual." Guilt, on the other hand, is subjectively "experienced as a burden of responsibility that one must bear for what has been done" and objectively "is fault of culpable error for which society may hold the offender responsible."³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

The cross is a response to shame, but not in a substitutionary way for “shame does not respond to the law of talion.”³⁹¹ Because the “crucifixion is the most shameful execution imaginable”³⁹² those oppressed by shame can take comfort in the fact that “the cross is the epitome of [Christ’s] identification” with them.³⁹³ Christ’s identification with those in shame, his communication of love via the cross, enables those oppressed by shame “to emerge from [their] self-isolation and confess [their] failure, feelings of unworthiness and despair.”³⁹⁴ Besides dealing with these negative effects of shame the crucified Christ also “reveals the normative ethical-social dimensions of shame [and in doing so] exposes false shame as an idolatrous human self-justification and, in exposing, breaks its power to instill fear.”³⁹⁵

The cross of Christ is also a salvific response to guilt, but not in the sense of substitution of punishment. This is because the “anticipation of punishment” is a secondary experience of guilt whereas the primary experience is “a sense of *indebtedness* and *blameworthiness*.”³⁹⁶ The cross of Christ responds to guilt in this latter sense. To say that Christ bore our guilt “can only mean,” according to Kraus, “that he assumed the responsibility to correct the intrinsic consequences, namely, alienation and death.”³⁹⁷ In other words, in reestablishing relationship with human beings through his gracious self-offering and by defeating death in his resurrection,

³⁹¹ Ibid., 215.

³⁹² Ibid., 216.

³⁹³ Ibid., 217.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 220.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 224.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 226.

Christ dealt with the consequences of sins and thus can be said to have borne human guilt.

Kraus is probably the author who most closely and robustly works through how the work of Christ responds to the various dimensions of the guilt and shame of sin. As will be seen below authors like Baker, Green and Belousek all maintain that atonement theologies must articulate how Christ's work has dealt with sin. Yet their concern is more in establishing this as the constraining rule and they themselves do not move from grammar to speech. Kraus does. Kraus moves beyond them in establishing a model of how Christ actually dealt with sin in its fourfold dimensions of the objective and subjective realities of both sin and guilt.

Thus, like Weaver and Reesor-Taylor, Kraus provides a model of atonement that shows how Christ was "irreducibly needed" for salvation. Yet his answers are again different from those of both Weaver and Reesor-Taylor. He shows that the cross of Christ was a response to both shame and guilt, understood objectively and subjectively. He also stresses Christ's unique role in being the first one to introduce this "pattern of relationships" that relates quite closely to the kingdom and discipleship.

Second School – Anabaptist-Mennonite Atonement Grammars

John Driver

John Driver's model of atonement seeks to uncover the missionary dimension of the New Testament in his theological reconstruction. The way Christ's work was communicated therein corresponds to "the practical exigencies of the

missionary activity of the primitive Christian community.”³⁹⁸ In fact, the multiple images and plurality of motifs used in the New Testament most likely “can be traced back to the diversity of contexts in which the apostolic mission was carried out by the primitive community.”³⁹⁹ Positively this means that the Gospel can be communicated to a wide variety of people today, coming from a wide variety of situations. One need not present only one understanding of the work of Christ but may contextualize the gospel to different people’s preoccupations whether they be “shame, lostness, alienation, domination by evil powers, slavery to sin, allegiance to other gods, enmity, rootlessness or guilt.”⁴⁰⁰

This positive potential for communicating in diverse cultures is taken away, however, when the multiple images of the New Testament are “reduced” to one theory. Driver “calls for [a recognition that] *all* of the biblical images are used in the New Testament for understanding the work of Christ... the entire gamut of New Testament motifs is required in order to understand the meaning of the work of Christ in a genuinely biblical way.”⁴⁰¹ There remains a danger that focusing on central images, and systematizing them, will “do violence to the so-called minor images.”⁴⁰² Salvation was first of all experience, one so powerful that it caused the early Christian community to seek, “find and use images to communicate and to explain the reality.”⁴⁰³ The relationship between imagery and Christology has a useful parallel in the relationship between imagery and ecclesiology in the New

³⁹⁸ Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 245.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 244.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 15.

Testament. Just as there are multiple images used for the church (body of Christ, bride, temple of the Holy Spirit etc) in the New Testament without recourse to systematization, so too there are multiple images used to communicate the atonement.⁴⁰⁴ These images “were not looked upon as definitions which served to set limits to the meaning of Christ’s atoning work.”⁴⁰⁵ There is a “temptation” in looking for definition, clarity and rationality “to choose among the metaphors” but this only serves to take away from the riches of understanding the atonement.⁴⁰⁶ Here Driver seems to be outlining an atonement grammar that insists on a fuller understanding of the work of Christ.

Driver does not hold reductionism culpable for all of western Christianity’s inadequate formulations of atonement. A central reason for failed formulations is “the absence of a covenanted community of God’s people as the essential context for understanding the atoning work of Christ.”⁴⁰⁷ This absence created the space for reinterpreting in the biblical data in terms of “practices and thought patterns of western Christendom” rather than covenant community.⁴⁰⁸ In other words the covenant community is essential to proper atonement grammar.

Driver does not say that this reductionism is inevitable, however. He says instead that the “urge to formulate theories... runs *the risk* of deforming or partializing the reality.”⁴⁰⁹ To speak about the atonement thus risks being grammatically incorrect. Driver does not expand on this point, but in saying this

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 35. *Emphasis mine.*

leaves room for some theories to hold consistency and avoid this risk. In fact, this makes sense in a theory that was formulated “with a view to being able to protect itself from other *less adequate formulations*.”⁴¹⁰ With these two arguments, and his qualifier about atonement in the context of covenanted community, he suggests that an adequate formulation is possible. However, he never takes up this suggestion nor does he reflect on it in any sustained way or use it to qualify any of his many critical statements about theories being reductionistic.

In his discussion of Abelard’s “subjective view” of the atonement, Driver critiques Abelard. For in Abelard’s “strictest logic [he] does not really quite answer the question of why Jesus had to die.”⁴¹¹ It seems that, although he leaves the door open to answer this question in his own model, Driver also “does not really quite answer the question of why Jesus had to die.” This is because Driver’s work is more in establishing atonement grammar appropriate “for the mission of the church.”

Mark Baker & Joel B. Green

What exactly is the “saving significance of Jesus’ death” for Baker and Green? This is a tricky question, given their ruminations on the usefulness of using multiple images and their warnings against the “violence”⁴¹² of reducing the meaning of the cross to a dominant motif or model. A few preliminary answers can be given to this question. First it would be helpful to explore further how the authors understand

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴¹² “The impression with which we are left is that the death of Jesus is a historical event of such profundity that we can only do it violence by narrowing its meaning to one interpretation or by privileging one interpretation over all the others.” Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 111.

the communicative nature of metaphor. This is necessary to understand the interpretative rules which Baker and Green say must be used in determining what metaphors can be used and how they can be used appropriately. Finally, in criticizing the atonement models of Peter Abelard and Kathleen Darby Ray, they implicitly set up another interpretative rule – the work of Christ must be seen as, somehow, both necessary and unique.

Given that the New Testament uses multiple “constellations of images” to communicate the meaning of Christ’s work, it seems understandable that the two authors would explore the nature of metaphor. They argue that “metaphors are two-edged: they reveal and conceal, highlight and hide.” Because of this there will never be a metaphor which “will capture the reality of the atonement.”⁴¹³ They give the example of the ransom metaphor. That metaphor communicates rightly that Jesus’ death was the cost for human salvation, in this sense the metaphor reveals. Yet it also conceals for it raises the question which it does not, and cannot, answer: “to whom was the purchase price paid?”⁴¹⁴

Metaphor has its limits but there are also limits to what metaphors can be used to understand the saving significance of the cross. They list four “co-ordinates” or guiding rules, a kind of atonement grammar, when it comes to articulating the atonement. The first guiding rule is related to sin. Here the constraint is “the acute need of the human community” which does not have the power to “save itself but needs help... from outside, from God.”⁴¹⁵ To communicate the cross is to

⁴¹³ Ibid., 118.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 128.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 138.

communicate that, somehow, God has saved helpless sinners. The second guiding rule is “the necessity of human response that flows out of the gracious act of God.”⁴¹⁶ Third between human need and the necessary human response is the next guiding rule, which is that the cross is “the ultimate manifestation of the love of God.” That is to say “God, acting on the basis of his covenant love, on his own initiative, was at work in the cross of Christ for human salvation.”⁴¹⁷ Finally, there is the importance that the work of Christ is available to all, without any discrimination towards groups.⁴¹⁸ Yet within these rules, and given the nature of metaphor, there is possible “not one but many models of the atonement. So infinite is the mystery of God’s saving work that [what is needed are] many interpretative images, many tones, many voices.”⁴¹⁹ Between these “non-negotiable points... much can be said about *how* this event could accomplish and signal the salvation of God’s people.”⁴²⁰ The language here comes very close to the distinction between atonement grammar and atonement speech used in this chapter but also can be read as setting up an opposition between the two.

Although Baker and Green do not explicate another interpretative rule or coordinate, they do imply one in their discussions of the atonement models of Peter Abelard and Kathleen Darby Ray, and a significant one at that. In critiquing Abelard they argue that “he does not explain why Jesus’ death on the cross was necessary. It

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 139.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

appears his atonement model could function logically without the cross.”⁴²¹ They critique Ray for similar reasons, suggesting that they “are unsure as to how Ray might present the singularity of Jesus work on the cross... the cross of Christ appears not to have actually won redemption for humanity.”⁴²² So Jesus’ cross must be necessary for his atoning work: it must be singular in its winning of redemption. Implied in these critiques of Abelard and Ray is a fifth co-ordinate for interpreting the cross: atonement models must communicate that Jesus’ work on the cross was necessary.

Baker and Green criticize Abelard and Ray for articulating atonement models in which Jesus’ death is neither unique nor intrinsically significant. Yet while policing the borders of appropriate atonement models, explaining the limits of metaphors and models, and calling out those who break these rules, Baker and Green themselves never articulate an atonement model. In doing so they seem to avoid this very question. How was Christ’s work on the cross unique or necessary? They (like Driver) say it is, and that it is essential that it is, but never attempt to explain how it is so. In the categories used in this chapter this is because they seem to be more concerned with the grammar of atonement. Yet, more than this, they seem to suggest a certain kind of impossibility of speaking about the atonement based on their proposed grammar. This element will be explored more in this chapter’s conclusion.

Thomas Finger

⁴²¹ Ibid., 164.

⁴²² Ibid., 220.

Finger is the third example of a writer in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition who refuses to set up a model of atonement, although he does so in a different way. Finger's understanding of the accomplishment of Jesus' death is closely tied with his understanding of the paradoxical nature of Jesus' victory in Christus Victor. In his *Christian Theology* he argues that all atonement models will in some way be applicable to the biblical data, but none will exhaust it for none is fully adequate.⁴²³ The "synthetic tendency of the human mind to explain everything" will not be able to explain the atoning work of Christ.⁴²⁴ Each model of atonement has a certain logic that when restricted "within a certain range... can usefully show the appropriateness, or the fittingness, of certain [elements] of Christ's atoning actions." Beyond this range, when the logic is "extended too far, it comes into conflict with other features of biblical revelation."⁴²⁵ In other words, the reality of the work of Christ can be over-understood and, thus, misunderstood. This would qualify as a grammatical rule, and bear similarities to how Driver, and Baker and Green, talk about the nature of the biblical text.

As was hinted at in the previous chapter, Finger believes that this is what happened historically to the Christus Victor motif. The motif is positive in its ability to integrate a whole swathe of biblical images and metaphors, "the broad, rich diversity of biblical data on these themes," but fails to provide the theological clarity that should be desired. This is because "Christ's atonement itself" is an

⁴²³ Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, 1:325.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 347.

“unfathomable mystery.”⁴²⁶ This “unique, unfathomable quality” of Christ’s work “can only [be] partially and one-sidedly” apprehended by any atonement models.

In his later work Finger also explores the mystery of this model as seen in the paradoxes of the powers within the conflictive, transformative and judgment dimensions of Christus Victor pointed out in the second chapter. Christ worked to open “humankind internally, and thereby all creation, to the divinizing dynamic.”⁴²⁷ He does this by being the first human being to “remain free from the powers [in order to] receive and be transformed by the Spirit.”⁴²⁸ By remaining free from the powers and receiving the Spirit he was able to bestow the Spirit on human beings.⁴²⁹ Part of remaining free included his “nonviolent, servantlike humility” which was a necessary part of Jesus’ resistance to and countering of the power’s “domineering, violent energy.” This violent energy that spread through all people was poison which could only be dissolved at the resurrection of Christ.⁴³⁰ Part of the reason this new, healing energy was released is that in Christ’s resurrection God’s vindication meant that the powers have been divested of “their dominion over humanity.”⁴³¹

Clearly then, the saving work of Christ is in defeating the powers, entities which remain both paradoxical and mysterious. Somehow these powers have inhibited and bound humanity in corruption. Christ, by living and dying free of the powers, has reestablished communion with God and blazed a path for other human beings to walk on. The Spirit plays an essential part in this, which Finger suggests

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 348.

⁴²⁷ Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 357.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 359.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 358.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 360.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 332.

means the traditional title “the work of Christ” is inadequate.⁴³² The role of the Spirit also suggests that the powers themselves have some sort of personal or spiritual quality to them,⁴³³ a notion which Finger does not further explore but which does increase the paradox of the whole motif.

Finger is not alone as Driver, Baker and Green also refuse to construct an atonement model for fear of reducing the New Testament images or doing violence to the biblical witness. For Finger this is not only because of the nature of the biblical witness but because of the nature of evil that Christ defeated. In this way these authors differ from Weaver, Reesor-Taylor and Kraus in their explicit rejection of developing an atonement model. Belousek, who will be explored below, follows with their line of thinking in refusing to set up an atonement model. Yet, as shall be argued, this move seems to hurt his overall project.

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek

Like many of the authors explored in this section, Belousek develops his model of atonement in light of certain unexamined assumptions about how the biblical text functions for the constructive task of theology. Following Driver and others, he suggests that the New Testament uses many different images to communicate the significance of Christ’s work on the cross. Atonement theories, “however, tend to select one image of atonement around which to construct a framework of salvation that either neglects all other images or reduces the several

⁴³² Ibid., 364.

⁴³³ Ibid., 357.

images to one image.”⁴³⁴ In light of this Belousek seeks to clarify that his book neither intends nor in fact does “propose a novel theory of atonement, or defend one of the historic theories over against all others.”⁴³⁵ However, given what he develops throughout the rest of his book, this seems disingenuous at worst and simply unhelpful at best. It is my contention that Belousek provides both the kind of material and original argument needed to present a persuasive model of atonement but fails to do so because of these unexamined assumptions.

Throughout his book Belousek enunciates several guiding rules about the accomplishment of the atonement, in dialogue with J. Denny Weaver specifically and penal substitution in general. In engaging with Weaver he suggests that the “fundamental theological divergence” between their two approaches is in “whether the cross of Christ itself is revelatory of God’s salvation or not – that is, whether the suffering and death of Jesus Christ were in some sense necessary, and whether they accomplished anything for the salvation of humanity, or not.”⁴³⁶ Belousek repeats that for him Jesus’ death was both “integral” and “necessary for fulfilling God’s purpose in redeeming humanity from the power of sin and gaining victory over death.”⁴³⁷

In his lengthy critical engagement with penal substitution he notes four significant areas of agreement with his own reading. These are kinds of atonement grammar. He affirms first that “Christ’s death was sacrificial,” that he “offered himself.” Second he affirms that Christ’s death was “vicarious,” that it was “for us.”

⁴³⁴ Belousek, *Atonement, Justice and Peace*, xii.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

Third he affirms that Christ's death was "atoning," that it was "for sins." Finally, he affirms that Christ's death was "necessary to God's work of salvation," that in the words of the New Testament "the Messiah must suffer."⁴³⁸ Thus in these two engagements Belousek affirms a basic conviction that Jesus' death was necessary for salvation and that it was a sacrifice "for us" in its dealing with sin.

Yet this basic outline does "not uniquely constrain the construction of a model of atonement," and is likewise "insufficient to determine a biblical theology of salvation."⁴³⁹ In other words, these "rules" provide the boundaries outside of which adequate atonement models cannot go, but they do not in themselves articulate any model in particular. They are grammar. Since Belousek shares the second school's distrust for putting forth a theory of atonement he leaves his readers to work through his rather robust material themselves to do what he says cannot be done.

There are two aspects of Belousek's material that seem conducive to constructing an atonement model. First is his insistence that the biblical texts that have until now been read as indicating substitution, should be read as texts of representation. Both substitution and representation are, by definition, about place-taking. The difference, and it is a key difference in atonement theology, is that substitution is taking the place of another in a way that excludes that person.⁴⁴⁰ Representation is "inclusive place-taking"⁴⁴¹ where Christ is taking the place of humanity in a way that makes sense of the participation of disciples afterwards (for example, "crucified with Christ"). Belousek puts it this way: "Christ himself is thus

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 93.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 317.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 333.

not the universal substitute, acting 'in place of' each human individually, but rather the corporate representative of humanity, acting 'on behalf of' all at once."⁴⁴² Just as Jesus' death was for the sake of others, "so also the baptized community continues participating in the death of Jesus through its suffering with and for others."⁴⁴³ Representation is more helpful than its alternative because "it is difficult to see how the vicarious character and the participatory aspect of Christ's death can cohere on the terms of the penal substitution model."⁴⁴⁴

The second aspect of Belousek's work that lends material for the construction of an atonement model is the manner in which he discusses the effect of Christ's death on sin. He says at one point that he does "leave unexplained 'what actually happens'" to sin in "God's action in Christ."⁴⁴⁵ Yet this is not quite true. In another section of the book he works more intensely with this question. He suggests that in dealing with sin the object of atoning sacrifice was never God nor sinners but sin and its polluting effects.⁴⁴⁶ Atonement sacrifice is, following the book of Leviticus, "the God-provided means by which God-self acted to remove sin, guilt and impurity."⁴⁴⁷ In all atoning sacrifice God is the actor, acting through the sacrifice⁴⁴⁸ and acting upon not sinners but sin itself.⁴⁴⁹ Belousek implies this is true also of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Thus Jesus is not humanity's "payment *to God* in exchange for being spared the penalty of sin (per penal substitution). For Jesus himself is

⁴⁴² Ibid., 334.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 320.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 334.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 188.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 191.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 188.

God's personal gift"⁴⁵⁰ to humanity. This means that Jesus' death was expiation and not propitiation. The former implies that Jesus' death was "directed toward removing sins."⁴⁵¹ The latter, falsely, sees "God's wrath as the primary barrier to forgiveness [whereas expiation] focuses on the sin and its polluting effects as the primary matter to be dealt with concerning forgiveness."⁴⁵² Instead of seeing the cross as God condemning "Christ in our place" this view sees "God in Christ [condemning] sin itself; condemnation has been passed, *not* from us to Christ, but from us to sin itself."⁴⁵³

Belousek further unpacks this condemning of sin by suggesting that what Christ has done is put an end to "the law of sin and death." This law works itself out in two ways. First, death is what the power of sin produces. Second sin leads to death because death is seen as "just retribution" for sin.⁴⁵⁴ In the cross God deals with the power of sin in both of these dimensions. First, God deals with sin's oppressive power in death by defeating death in the resurrection of Jesus. Second he deals with death as sin's retribution by undoing retribution through Christ's death and resurrection.⁴⁵⁵

Thus Belousek seems to offer what could be termed a "Representation without Retribution" model of atonement. In the cross of Christ humanity had done its worse in killing God incarnate. The only solution to such an act in the retributive paradigm is God wiping out all humanity. Yet God listened to Christ's intercession

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 196. Italics original.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 245.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 379.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 380.

and, in raising Jesus from the dead, overcame the logic of retribution and offered humanity grace. In this act, sin was overcome first as something that organically leads to death in the power of the resurrection and second as something that retributively leads to death in God's undoing of retribution in raising Jesus from the dead (instead of destroying all humanity). Thus the cross of Christ can be spoken of as atoning since in it God has acted to deal with sin. The cross of Christ is also representative, and thus inclusive, of the disciple's participation as followers of Christ take up their own cross and act non-retributively in service of justice and peace in the world.

Conclusion

This chapter began by making a distinction between first-order and second-order propositions in theology or between establishing theological grammars and the range of theologies they allow. In imposing this distinction on the seven authors it was discovered that such an approach could fruitfully sort out the authors, showing which authors were more concerned more directly with talking about Christ's work and those authors concerned more with laying out the atonement grammars which both allow and constrain such speech. By taking this approach a few significant discoveries were made within these authors that deserve attention before moving on to the next chapter.

First of all, six of these authors explicitly argue that atonement models must show how Jesus' work was both unique and objective. Reesor-Taylor does not deal with this explicitly, but would not necessarily contradict this assertion. By unique

the authors mean that Jesus has done something that no one else could do and by objective they mean his work changed the nature of reality independent of human perception or reception of his work. It is from this perspective that Driver, Weaver, and Baker and Green criticize the atonement proposals of both Abelard and certain Feminist theologians. These proposals are criticized for, in the language used in this chapter, being grammatically incorrect. This does not mean that these authors all propose ways Jesus' work can be seen as unique and objective. The first school does but the second school does not.

The second significant discovery here is about the role that the authors assign to Jesus' death in his salvific work. There is almost a consensus within the authors that Jesus' death has salvific efficacy, with one lone dissenter. Weaver is adamant that Jesus' death is not needed in any direct way for salvation. Driver, Baker and Green, and Belousek all disagree. For these four authors, Jesus' death is absolutely needed. Baker and Green define atonement as the "saving significance of Jesus' death" and argue that atonement models must explain how it was necessary. Driver and Belousek argue the same thing. Kraus, Finger and Reesor-Taylor, while not touching on Jesus' death in atonement grammars, provide models of how Jesus' death effected salvation from sin. Thus in this area there is not a tidy consensus about the role of Jesus' death but there is a tendency to affirm that it was necessary in some way for salvation.

The third discovery made regards the complex of human sin and divine violence. Specifically these authors have complicated any direct link between atonement and violence, even if some of them allow for violence on the part of God.

All these authors seem aware, some more explicitly than others, that there are connections in traditional atonement theologies between sin, guilt, punishment and divine violence that are problematic, particularly from a perspective that would want to consider divine violence more critically. In these traditional views, God forgives sins through committing violence against innocent Jesus. Weaver is most direct in cutting through these connections trying to come up with a nonviolent atonement, suggesting God does not violently bring salvation in any way (which in turns leads him to suggest that, since Jesus' death was violent, God did not actually need it). Kraus and Reesor-Taylor answer these concerns slightly differently. Both of these authors separate guilt from punishment by suggesting guilt is primarily about responsibility and only secondarily about punishment. Finger suggests the cross is God's punishment, though God's punishment is not direct but rather God's action of "handing over" people into slavery to the powers they freely obey. Belousek, while holding to the belief that God still has a prerogative of retribution, argues that the cross of Christ is not a retributive act of God but God acting against retribution. All of these are different answers but all work within a grammar that suggests that retribution is not a direct or necessary divine response to sin. The connections between guilt, punishment and violence are made tenuous. Since atonement is, as Belousek points out, God's action against sin, this new grammar on sin is actually a development within atonement grammar.

The fourth discovery is this complicated relationship between atonement grammar and speaking about the atonement that comes out especially in the second school. On the one hand Driver et al. wish to lay out the general rules about how to

speaking about the atonement. Yet there also seems to be hesitancy to try and say something about the atonement. This hesitancy is rooted in an understanding that the New Testament contains multiple images and motifs about the atonement and that the nature of Christ's work is inexhaustibly mysterious. The nature of metaphor and mystery becomes an operative grammatical rule but with a different kind of restraining work. Whereas a grammatical rule like "atonement models must answer how Jesus' work was necessary" will regulate proposals by "excluding some and permitting others" rules about mystery and metaphor seem to have a different function: to exclude proposals that suggest finality and certainty, or that say too much or too little, and permitting ones that admit provisionality and say just enough.

Yet these authors also point to a grammatical rule complementing the rule about mystery and provisionality. This rule suggests that because these rules by themselves are "insufficient to determine a biblical theology of salvation" (Belousek) and in order to "protect against *less adequate formulations*" (Driver) there is given an "open, nay irresistible, invitation to try" to formulate a model, however provisional (Weaver). This is not the direct argument from any of these authors, but a synthesis of what both schools have laid out in terms of atonement grammar. Augustine's explanation of trinitarian language is an apt analogy here: "The formula three persons was coined not in order to give a complete explanation by means of it, but in order that we might not be obliged to remain silent."⁴⁵⁶ Just as trinitarian language does not give a "complete explanation," so to language about the work of

⁴⁵⁶ Quoted in Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 203.

Christ does not need to vainly hope for “complete explanation” but neither must it resign itself to silence.

Thus this chapter has made four important discoveries about the grammars of Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theologies. First is that, in however Christ’s work is conceived, it must be understood in such a way that his work is both unique and objective in nature. Second, there is a general understanding that Christ’s death must be understood as necessary for human salvation in some way. Third, whatever one thinks about God’s violence, violent punishment need not be seen as God’s first or inevitable response to sin. Fourth and finally, the nature of theological mystery means one cannot arrive at a final explanation of the work of Christ and all answers will remain provisional. Yet the reality of provisionality should not be misunderstood as recommending complete silence, as the grammatical rules are insufficient substitutes for speech itself. There is an open invitation to engage in the construction of doctrinal models, because of, not in spite of, their inevitable incompleteness. These discoveries are the grammatical rules generally common to Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement discourse.

Conclusion

The contention of this thesis is that the theological work on atonement done in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition is shaped by the centrality of its discipleship ecclesiology. The first chapter looked at the discipleship ecclesiology of the tradition as it stood mid-twentieth century by examining the work of both Harold Bender and John Howard Yoder. The next chapter changed focus and gave a broad review of the atonement theologies of seven authors standing in this tradition, each of whom have written in the past three decades. The third chapter brought these topics into conversation with each other as it sifted out the role of the community of disciples in these atonement theologies. This work found that all seven authors adamantly place ecclesiology at the heart of their understanding of the work of Christ. The fourth chapter looked at the authors through the category of atonement grammars and saw that while some of the authors retreat from developing an atonement model, all of them argue that atonement theologies must articulate how Christ's work was both unique and objective.

Not all of these authors have been doing the same thing. Driver writes about the atonement with the church's cross-cultural mission in view, as do Baker and Green. Kraus and Finger are both writing larger systematic theologies that include sections on the work of Christ. Weaver and Belousek are trying to connect the atonement to concerns about violence and retribution. Reesor-Taylor is writing a dissertation on Anselm's compatibility with peace theology. Despite coming from different starting points all of these authors have arrived at the question of how to

articulate the atonement in light of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition's understanding of the church as a community of disciples.

This chapter has the constructive task of reflecting back the state of Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology, naming both its strengths and weaknesses and pointing out ways the conversation could be bolstered. One objective of this thesis was to provide an overview that would further theological development and conversation with the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition but also between traditions, particularly where questions of both church unity and witness are at stake. To this end this chapter will explore in two sections the substance and limits of these theologies, unpacking each in a careful and nuanced way. The section on substance will identify the meaningful contributions these seven authors have given to atonement discussions within and beyond the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, focusing on commonalities between the authors. It will seek to find the parts of their proposals that are most coherent. The section on limits will name those conceptual barriers to further both development of thought and potential engagement with other perspectives on the work of Christ from different Christian traditions. In other words, this section will seek to recognize where there might be inadequate thinking, argue why this is dangerous and seek to offer potential remedies.

Substance

Why substance? This section seeks not to show where these authors have repeated the tradition that came before them, or to show where they might have trivial novelties. Instead, it hopes to name the areas that are not only new but can be seen as, in some way, enduring. It is my contention that the developments named here have staying power within Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology. It is difficult to imagine atonement theology being done in this tradition without these developments having a significant place, and it will probably take quite a concerted effort to dethrone any of them.

As will be seen, these four developments are not directly about the atonement. Rather, the four developments here are elements that the authors see as threatened by traditional accounts of the work of Christ. Thus new articulations of the work of Christ must explain in a consistent way how each of these developments is relevant. Any that do not will fail to be accurate expressions of atonement theology within this tradition. In the framework of the last chapter, each of these developments is an additional rule for Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement grammar.

The first substantial development in these theologies that seems to have staying power is very close to the heart of this thesis. For these authors forming the church as a community of disciples is intrinsic and central to the work of Christ. The root of this can be traced back to before substitutionary atonement was challenged as the dominant model. Bender warned against “Christ [becoming] *only* the sinbearer.” While this atoning work was “wholly necessary,” it is not the end goal for

it ignores the importance of Christ's lordship and discipleship.⁴⁵⁷ Yoder puts forth a similar argument when he writes that the "ethical meaning of the cross is often dismissed for dogmatic reasons when people argue that since Jesus 'had to die' his final acts have no political meaning."⁴⁵⁸ He says he is not denying that Jesus was a "sacrifice" but, like Bender, only suggesting that accounts where his sacrifice is made to exclude his sovereignty are inadequate.⁴⁵⁹ Both recognize in atonement theology a dangerous dichotomy between Jesus' sacrifice and his sovereignty which they try to overcome.

The authors explored in this thesis develop this critique further. First they suggest that the primary work of Christ is the creation of a people. Second, they develop critiques of atonement accounts that exclude the necessity of discipleship. In terms of the first critique, Driver argues that "the creation of the community ... is not coincidental, nor is it a secondary result of the saving work of Christ... [Rather] the creation of a new humanity . . . is a *primary and direct result*" of Christ's work.⁴⁶⁰ In terms of the second critique, Driver tells an anecdote of Francisco Franco's salvific status, asking what kind of understanding of Christ's work would separate "being saved" from transformational discipleship.⁴⁶¹ In terms of the community-forming nature of Christ's work, Kraus suggests that Jesus came "actually to inaugurate a new beginning" the end goal of which was "*to create a new order of*

⁴⁵⁷ Bender, "Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship," 48. Emphasis original.

⁴⁵⁸ Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 58.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁶⁰ Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 229. Emphasis original.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

relationships in keeping with his own nature and will to love."⁴⁶² He argues that Protestant soteriology has failed to recognize that these new relationships are key to the gospel itself. In terms of the centrality of discipleship Kraus argued that in seeking to understand "Jesus' person and work" one should never use "categories which are exclusive of the disciples' participation in his life and mission."⁴⁶³

In terms of discipleship, Baker and Green ask what basis for ethics remains if the cross is understood simply as Jesus taking the punishment deserved by humanity.⁴⁶⁴ In terms of the corporate impact of Christ's work they critique Abelard for whom "the community-forming nature of Christ's work"⁴⁶⁵ is not integral to his understanding of the atonement. In terms of community, Weaver suggests that the atonement motif is "also an image of ecclesiology."⁴⁶⁶ He follows theologians who argue that "atonement formulas devoid of ethics actually contribute to sinful living since they provide a means to maintain a proper legal status before God without speaking about transformed life under the rule of God."⁴⁶⁷ In different ways, both Belousek and Reesor-Taylor integrate the community of disciples as an intrinsic element of their atonement theologies. As was indicated in previous chapters these authors move beyond Bender and Yoder, for whereas the latter two critique how articulations of substitutionary atonement can exclude concerns about discipleship, church and social ethics, the former argue implicitly that all articulations of substitutionary atonement do, in fact, exclude these concerns.

⁴⁶² Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 145.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁶⁴ Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 48.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁶⁶ Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 101.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

The second core concept that has emerged is an understanding that Christ's primary mission was in bringing the kingdom of God understood as a concrete, historical, transformative reality. This began with Yoder who suggests that Jesus was "the bearer of a new possibility of human, social and therefore political relationships"⁴⁶⁸ and that his cross, far from representing an abstract transaction, has "concrete social meaning [for both] enmity and power."⁴⁶⁹ This idea is then imported into the atonement theologies of these authors and made integral. Driver argues that Jesus came proclaiming God's kingdom and the conflict that this generated led to his death.⁴⁷⁰ Kraus echoes this sentiment when he argues that Jesus came to initiate the rule of God. Finger holds to this as well when he critiques Anselm who seems to lack any "concrete emphasis on [Jesus'] kingdom ministry" within his atonement theology.⁴⁷¹

Weaver is most emphatic on this point and places Jesus' mission of witnessing to the kingdom at the heart of his atonement model. Although the language of "kingdom" or "reign of God" is not present in the same way in Baker and Green or Belousek, the idea that Christ came to bring some kind of concrete, historical transformation is present. It is only Reesor-Taylor who does not engage with this new development. The significance of these commonalities should not be lost. It is essentially redefining the meaning of salvation (salvation as this-worldly transformation rather than the after-death destination of individuals) which will have inevitable effects on how Jesus' saving work is understood.

⁴⁶⁸ Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 38.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁷⁰ Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 19.

⁴⁷¹ Finger, *Christian Theology*, 1:308.

The third substantial development, and closely related to the second, is the common belief that Christ's life and teaching cannot be separated from his death. One begins to see hints of this in Bender, who connects discipleship closely to "the teaching and example of Christ."⁴⁷² Yoder also prepared for this development in arguing, essentially, that if Jesus' life was political his death also must be understood politically.⁴⁷³ Driver asserts that Jesus' death was the result of the conflict generated by his kingdom proclamation, thus it can be seen there is "a continuity between Jesus' life and death."⁴⁷⁴ Finger also argues that Jesus life and death cannot be separated since he died because of how he lived.⁴⁷⁵ To say that Christ's death is salvific, while not paying attention to the life he led which led to his death, is a significant mistake. How can the efficacy of his death be understood without understanding why he died?

Although they do not spend much time on this, Baker and Green⁴⁷⁶ and Belousek⁴⁷⁷ all suggest that Jesus' life is one of the key narratives that frame or contextualize his death. Weaver is once again the most emphatic on this, although significantly not unique, in his development of his atonement model. He makes the narrative of Jesus an essential element of his Christus Victor account, differentiating that from both Gustav Aulen's and Patristic accounts of that model.⁴⁷⁸ One of his (many) critiques of Anselm is that in *Cur Deus Homo* the medieval bishop does not

⁴⁷² Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*, 20.

⁴⁷³ Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 60. ("Since Jesus was a political person his cross must be understood politically.")

⁴⁷⁴ Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 79.

⁴⁷⁵ Finger, *Christian Theology*, 303.

⁴⁷⁶ Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 28.

⁴⁷⁷ Belousek, *Atonement, Justice and Peace*, 14.

⁴⁷⁸ Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 23.

include “the teachings and example of Jesus” in a way in which they are “integral to [his] atoning work.”⁴⁷⁹

The fourth development, intimately related to the last three, is an understanding of the church’s presence in the world. The church is seen as a redemptive, liberating presence in the world. The disciples of Christ do not just imitate Jesus, they participate in his kingdom-mission. The early developments of this idea can be seen in Yoder’s concept that “following Jesus” is the proper Christian response to the evil in the world.⁴⁸⁰ Where Bender suggests that a Christian would withdraw from world betterment and try to establish a “Christian social order” in the church,⁴⁸¹ for Yoder discipleship is not a withdrawal from the world but “political responsibility.” It is a vocation to be in the world as Christ was in the world.⁴⁸² Yoder’s deconstruction of Bender’s binary is important to understanding not only the further development of discipleship ecclesiology in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition but also its development in atonement theology. If Christ’s presence in the world was redemptive, so too is the presence of his body, the church. This development might be the most significant one, a key to understanding the rest.

For Kraus Jesus came not only to bring the kingdom but to appoint “his followers to continue this mission.”⁴⁸³ Growing out of this idea Kraus argues that it is theologically improper to assign to Jesus a “qualitatively different mission

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁸⁰ Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 21.

⁴⁸¹ Bender, “Mennonite Conception of the Church,” 99.

⁴⁸² Yoder, *Peace Without Eschatology*, 148.

⁴⁸³ Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 239.

(vocation)” from his disciples.⁴⁸⁴ Although he does not use this “participation-in-mission” language, Finger argues that the church has a role in extending the new creation.⁴⁸⁵ Weaver continues this development when he argues “the church was the earthly instrument that continued Jesus’ mission of making visible the reign of God.”⁴⁸⁶ Belousek follows this line of thought as well too as he sees “the mission of the church as part of God’s purpose of redemption through the cross and resurrection of Christ.”⁴⁸⁷

This sharing-in-mission concept has implications for how the work of Christ is even categorized, as some of these authors allude. Disciples are not merely passive recipients of Christ’s saving benefits, but rather they share in his saving work, conceived most often in kingdom-of-God terms. In other words, if his cross was salvific, and his disciples are to take up their crosses in following him, their crosses must in some way be salvific or redemptive. Although not all of the authors explored in this thesis touch on this idea it seems to have become important enough to be named as one of the four core substantial developments in recent Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology.

These four ideas, while distinct, are connected to each other in such a way as to form some sort of a whole. The corporate discipleship of the church is a sharing in Jesus’ death, his death is connected to how he lived his life, his life is connected to his kingdom-mission, which means that the corporate discipleship of the church is not merely imitation but sharing in his mission. This attentiveness to these essential

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁸⁵ Finger, *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 233.

⁴⁸⁶ Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 101.

⁴⁸⁷ Belousek, *Atonement, Justice and Peace*, x.

connections is one of the strongest elements in these theologies. There is a strong tradition in these theologies that suggests an atonement theology that is inattentive and narrowed in focus is ultimately inadequate. Each of these four developments broadens the atonement grammar clarified in the previous chapter.

Limits

Why limits? Concepts are dialectical in a sense: they both enable understanding but they can also limit understanding. The second part of this final chapter looks at one major concept that exists within these theologies that might limit or cut short understanding of Christ's work. The main limit explored here is not so much material but categorical. This limit is (what seems to be) the conceptual fusing of the work of Christ with his atoning work—seeing the two as the same—that exists with some of these authors. Hoping to maintain that the primary work of Christ was his people-creating kingdom-mission, these authors seek to avoid a reductionist account that suggests that Christ saved individuals separate from how they live, from the church and from the real world of concrete history. Yet in trying to focus on this main hope the authors do not focus sufficient attention on the very idea of atoning for sins. This can be seen, for instance, in the fact there is a lot of substantial agreement about the political nature of the kingdom or the centrality of the church but not agreement on either the nature of sin or the meaning of atonement.

The atonement is seen as the work of Christ. I am arguing that “the work of Christ” as a doctrinal category is limiting and cannot fit into itself the fullness of the

arguments these authors are making. As Belousek points out atonement is more specifically an act of God where God-self removes sin and its polluting effects. This is not the same as forming the faithful church or bringing historical transformation even if it is certainly related to that work. Forming the community or bringing the kingdom may be an important part of the work of Christ, but they are not identical to atoning for sins. The problem is that the category “work of Christ” does not enable these authors to devote sufficient attention to the nature of atonement for sins, leaving this area undeveloped. What is more, there is an implicit apprehension that focusing on the later, particularly in its penal substitution construction, will distract from these larger and more important dimensions of Christ’s work. What is needed are new categories that will enable these authors to consider more consistently and carefully the nature of the atonement while recognizing and safeguarding Christ’s more important work of bringing the kingdom and forming the church.

One of Michael Gorman’s main contentions in his recent book *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant* is that “most interpretations of the atonement concentrate on the *penultimate* rather than the *ultimate* purpose of Jesus’ death.”⁴⁸⁸ Like the authors explored in the preceding chapters Gorman contends that in most of the New Testament “the ultimate purpose of Jesus’ death was to create a transformed people, a (new) people living out a (new) covenant relationship with God together.” Most atonement models “stop short of this goal,

⁴⁸⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant—A (Not So) New Model of the Atonement* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 2.

focusing on absolutely necessary but nonetheless penultimate issues.”⁴⁸⁹ Here Gorman sounds like Bender when he writes “forgiveness of sins via the sacrifice of Christ is an essential, but not sufficient, dimension of an atonement model rooted in the New Testament texts.”⁴⁹⁰

What Gorman brings to this discussion is this helpful, if underdeveloped, distinction between the *penultimate* and *ultimate* purposes of Christ’s work. Like these authors he argues that the ultimate purpose of Christ’s work is the corporate discipleship of the church or, in his language, the new covenant people. Like these authors he is concerned with how models concerning themselves with penultimate purposes often exclude the ultimate purpose of Christ’s work, not just by focus but by structural design. Specifically certain substitutionary accounts not only deal with penultimate issues of atoning for sin but present themselves as exhaustive accounts, sidelining discipleship, the church and kingdom transformation.

Mindful of these distinctions I would contend that most of these theologies, even when discussing the atonement, are not primarily about the atonement but are about the ultimate ecclesial and kingdom purposes of Christ’s work. There is an awareness that traditional atonement models, in trying to articulate the penultimate work of Christ, have separated it from and thus marginalized this more important work.

This concern, however, cannot be adequately dealt with because of the doctrinal categories these authors work with. It is my contention that Gorman’s categorical distinctions would give important space for necessary reflections to

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 225.

happen. Could the lack of distinction in current categories hinder the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition from adequately bridging Christ's atoning work to his work of bringing the kingdom and creating the church? One could see this inhibition in the general lack of consistency in reflections on sin, judgment, punishment etc., as well as the fear (repeated in these authors) that traditional atonement theologies excludes the participation of disciples. The basic problem with much of these theologies is that they do not adequately integrate discipleship ecclesiology with the atonement. They do not integrate, partially, because of inadequate (in the sense of minimal) reflection about the nature of sin, judgment and atonement. In light of these distinctions, helpfully formulated by Gorman, the concern of many of these authors could be formulated more adequately as follows: *In traditional accounts of the work of Christ his penultimate work of atoning for sins on the cross has not only distracted from his wider work of bringing the kingdom and forming the church as a community of disciples but has been articulated in such a way as to exclude this ultimate work.*

Perhaps, in light of Gorman's distinctions, new rules can be added to Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement grammar. First, atonement models must not articulate Christ's penultimate work of atoning for sins in a way that logically excludes his ultimate work of bringing the kingdom and forming the church. Second, as a mirror image of the first, atonement models must not articulate Christ's primary work of bringing the kingdom and forming the church without also giving an account of how he atoned for sins. These rules, of course, do not actually tell us

how Christ did any of this but they do shape the way Christ's work can and should be talked about.

Conclusion

The overall message is resoundingly clear: Christ did not come to offer salvation for individuals outside of history. Christ came to offer the kingdom: a concrete social-spiritual change that touches on all areas of the life that is patterned after him. His proclamation of the kingdom led to his nonviolent death and after his resurrection has called together the church to corporately continue his kingdom-bearing mission. All of these connections must be kept together. Christ's death must not be isolated from his life, individuals must not be isolated from the church, the church must not be isolated from the kingdom, and forgiveness must not be isolated from faithfulness. While these may have been made clear, what remains unclear is how Christ has atoned for, or dealt with, sin. Traditional accounts have so exclusively concerned themselves with this atoning work, and have so often forgotten his larger and more ultimate work, that the corrective work of these writers have often left this subject unsatisfactorily reflected upon. They have put the puzzle together but one piece is still missing.

The future task of Anabaptist-Mennonite atonement theology may indeed be the atonement itself. If atonement is understood as how God-in-Christ dealt with sin then this opens up important questions of what sin is and what it means to say God deals with it. This also raises the question of how Christ's penultimate work of atoning for sins relates to his more ultimate work of bringing the kingdom and

forming the church. These authors have been true to their tradition and have insisted on the centrality of discipleship ecclesiology for understanding the work of Christ. Yet that does not take away the attention that these questions rightfully deserve.

This final chapter has sought to honour what is best in these theologies while trying to provide a corrective to unhelpful patterns of thought. Specifically, it has suggested new distinctions within the category of the work of Christ. Just as Christology itself has been traditionally subdivided into the person and work of Christ this author has suggested, following the work of Michael Gorman, that theology subdivides the work of Christ into his penultimate and his ultimate work. This will allow questions about the atonement to be asked without fear of reductionism. Such a development of doctrinal categories may seem slightly byzantine but is meant only as a helpful conceptual tool to avoid redundant binaries between (as Yoder framed it) Christ's sacrifice and his sovereignty.

The Anabaptist-Mennonite theological tradition is, hopefully, not done yet. It still has work to do in articulating its own discipleship ecclesiology and its own understanding of the penultimate and ultimate work of Christ. This thesis has not only identified which ideas have staying power but also has identified the destabilizing ideas, those arguments and concepts which should be carefully worked through. Ideally, this thesis can be a meaningful contribution to the conversations both on the work of Christ and on the Church as it moves forward.

Bibliography

Baker, Mark and Joel B. Green. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.

Belousek, Darrin Snyder. *Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

Bender, Harold S. "The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24 (1950): 25-32.

_____. *The Anabaptist Vision*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1944.

_____. "The Mennonite Conception of the Church and Its Relation To Community Building." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 19 (1945): 90-100.

_____. *These Are My People*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1960.

_____. "'Walking in the Resurrection': the Anabaptist Doctrine of Regeneration and Discipleship." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35 (1961): 96-110.

Driver, John. *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986.

Finger, Thomas N. *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, vol. 1. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985.

_____. *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004.

Gorman, Michael J. *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant—A (Not So) New Model of the Atonement*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

Kraus, C. Norman. *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from A Disciple's Perspective*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987.

Keim, Albert N. *Harold S. Bender: 1897-1962*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998.

Lindbeck, George. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Theology*. 2nd edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Reesor-Taylor, Rachel. "Anselm's Cur Deus Homo For A Peace Theology: On the Compatibility of Non-Violence and Sacrificial Atonement." Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2009.

Sider, J. Alexander. "Who Durst Defy the Omnipotent to Arms?" The Nonviolent Atonement and a Non-Competitive Doctrine of God." In *The Work of Jesus Christ in Anabaptist Perspective: Essays in Honor of J. Denny Weaver*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver and Gerald J. Mast, 106-23. Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2008.

Weaver, J. Denny. *The Nonviolent Atonement*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011.

_____. "Living in the Reign of God in the 'Real World': Getting beyond Two-Kingdom Theology." In *Exiles in the Empire: Believers Church Perspectives on Politics*, ed. Nathan E. Yoder and Carol A. Scheppard. Studies in the Believers Church Tradition, 173-93. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006.

_____. Review of *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* by John Driver. *The Conrad Grebel Review* 4, no. 3 (1986): 259-262.

Yoder, John Howard. *Christian Witness to the State*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002.

_____. *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003.

_____. *The Politics of Jesus*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993.

_____. *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998.