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Reformed Versus Anabaptist Social Strategies: An Inadequate Typology

by John H. Yoder

Some of the striking contours of our time—the arms race, the appearance of Liberation Theology, the increasing marginalization of the church in the North Atlantic nations—have made the Anabaptist tradition look more interesting to many. The difficulty for those in other traditions who wish to learn of this tradition has been finding appropriate situations for dialogue. We are delighted to present one such dialogue here. John Howard Yoder, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, has been a leading interpreter of Anabaptist traditions for this generation; Richard Mouw, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, has been one of the few Reformed thinkers who have sought to nurture this particular dialogue. To both of these go our thanks.

I have been invited by the editors of the *TSF Bulletin* to undertake two different and, in fact in a way, contradictory arguments. First, I shall show why the widely used Reformed/Anabaptist typology, despite or maybe because of its wide circulation, is untrue to the facts of the argument. The Reformed/Anabaptist debate does not represent a classical dilemma.

By the term "classical dilemma," I mean that the kind of necessary decision which one can argue is genuinely built into the shape of a problem, so that the logically available options are few; they constantly recur as, through history, Christian thought encounters afresh the same basic questions; and one can show in the logic or the socio-logic of the problem that whenever it arises there is the same necessary choice.

By the nature of the case my objections will be of different kinds. Some are specifically historical, derived from the sixteenth century experience, which the approach I am objecting to takes as a model. (Since sixteenth-century history is my own dissertation field, my skepticism on this subject expresses an affirmation of, not doubt about, the uses of history.) Others relate more to contemporary church politics and caucus policies. Still others are more abstractly logical. Each kind of argument would need to be introduced by documentation, which, in this context, would be too much.

My second task will be to argue as if the typology were fair to the facts, and as if the use made of it by persons affirming a "Reformed" loyalty were to be cogent in rejecting what they call "Anabaptist." I shall seek to disengage from the "typed" debate what the "Reformed" would then need to prove.

The Reformed/Anabaptist Typology: An Historical Challenge

In the present context we may stipulate what elsewhere might need to be documented or exemplified further: the self-understanding of churches in the Reformed tradition begins by naming and rejecting "the Anabaptists." The Belgic Confession is prototypical: "We detest the error of the Anabaptists and other seditious people."[1]

Richard Mouw, in his *Politics and the Biblical Drama*, pp. 93ff., discusses the "principalities and powers" language of the Pauline literature, as the pertinence of those passages and their world view has been brought to the fore by Reformed theologians such as Berkhof, Caird, Barth, van den Heuvel, Visser 't Hooft, and Ellul. In the midst of this intra-Reformed debate, Mouw (*Politics*, pp. 98ff.) moves to my use (*The Politics of Jesus*, pp. 135ff.) of the same Pauline materials. Both Mouw's work and mine claim to be Bible studies. Yet the argument shifts without explanation to the sixteenth century typology.

His description is substantially the same as mine in chapter eight of my *Politics of Jesus*, which is no surprise, since he leans on the same group of Reformed exegetes and theologians I had been citing. But then, just before it gets serious, Mouw warns the reader that there is this Reformed/Anabaptist dialogue, beginning with a division between Hendrik Berkhof (whose work on the subject I first introduced to English readers) and myself. Before the readers can proceed any further the typological barrier must be built: "before looking at some of the details of Yoder's discussion, some note must be taken of the historical setting . . ." I do not grant that anything dealt with in the following pages of my interpretation of Paul and the powers, or Paul and *Haustafeln*, or John of Patmos and historical hope, is specifically "Anabaptist." They are not texts which sixteenth-century Anabaptists used a lot, in this interpretation, and Calvin or Knox did not. Especially the *Haustafeln* have been used with far greater simplicity, clarity, and historical impact in Reformed social thought than ever by Mennonites. I can't really complain if the historical typology keeps Mouw from fairly understanding me on the first go-round; but that he lets a sixteenth-century typology keep him from dealing directly with Paul and John as interpreters of the "Biblical Drama" is too bad. That one unfinished friendly debate shall have to serve as documentation of the relevance of the theme.

If any debate is important, it is a mark of that importance that the two parties differ, at least at the outset, not only in their conclusions but in their understanding of what the debate is about. That is certainly the case here. The difference of views begins with the history. In all their major manifestations, these two theological tendencies arose interlocked with one another. There were many kinds of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, but the most viable group, the first to initiate adult baptism, and the first to state the view of the state which is later taken as typical, arose in Zwingli's own circle. It first spread rapidly and then survived in the Zurich/Bern/Strasbourg triangle (later expanded to Geneva) which was at the same time the birthplace of Reformed theology. In the Netherlands, the Anabaptists were there first. They were tolerated when William of Orange consolidated a pro-Reformed state structure in the northern Netherlands and abandoned the southern Netherlands to the Spaniards. In the 1640s the consolidation of English Calvinism at Westminster coincided in time with the definition of the Baptist and Quaker alternatives. Thus these two streams or strands are regularly interlocked as neither of them is with other forms of protestantism, Lutheran, Anglican, or later pietists, etc.

In their interlocking naturally, the two streams dealt with their relationship in contradictory ways. The protestant creeds in general do not refer to the other confessions. The Augsburg confession refers to the Roman church only at points of claimed agreement, though it condemns "the Anabaptists" five times. Lutheran confessions do not name Anglicans or Zwinglians. Reformed confessions do not name Anglicans or Lutherans. But they all do name and condemn "the Anabaptists."

Thus, in its creeds, the "Reformed tradition" has a definition of the relationship between the Reformed and Anabaptist types of social ethic. This includes by implication a definition of historical origins, namely, that Anabaptist is something fundamentally different from "The Reformation." It therefore can best be understood by dramatizing and making central the points at which they differ, those points (rejection of the cultural mandate and rejection of the state) being the fulcrum or hub which moves all the rest.

The various sixteenth-century movements which were called "Anabaptist" differed so much among themselves that it is not really proper to speak of them as one movement. They did not respond to the guidance of a single leader or talk a single kind of language. But it was probably true of all of them that they began by considering themselves a part of the wider reformation movement of which Erasmus, Luther, and Zwingli were the major voices. Once those three major figures fell apart, the radicals considered

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themselves as being more with Luther and Zwingli than with Erasmus, since they too had already implicitly if not explicitly broken their ties with medieval Catholic unity, although some of them retained a pre-protestant mystical piety. It was true of almost all of them, although in quite different ways—some apocalyptic, some mystical, some intellectual, some biblicistic—that they claimed to be doing what the official reformers were doing, but more thoroughly and radically, refusing to let themselves be held back by the reticence of the civil authorities, and refusing to leave any agenda untouched in the reformation program.

It clearly spreads the debate too widely to speak of all the various kinds of Anabaptists together, because they radicalized the reformation intention in different directions. Putting them all in one bag was part of the strategy of the official Reformation, in order to be able to condemn them more easily by ascribing to each the vices of all. Yet the fact remains that they all did claim to be carrying the Reformation, properly so-called, to its logical conclusion, not doing something else, and not coming from somewhere else.

To come to the narrower focus of those whom Bullinger called the "general Anabaptists," or whom George Williams calls the "evangelical Anabaptists," the shape of the radicalization can be even more simply shown. The leaders of this movement were literally the pupils of Huldrych Zwingli. They became disappointed with his leadership because he did not live up to his promises and threats. When they went beyond him they used no language against him but what they had learned from him. The most sweeping affirmation that this particular kind of Anabaptism represents a radicalizing of the original language of the Zwinglian Reformation is today made by the late Richard Stauffer, the most respected Calvin scholar of his generation in French speaking Europe.

First, in terms of genetic relationships, Anabaptism in the Upper Rhine Valley is "radicalized Reformation." The Anabaptists were the children of Zwingli. When he disavowed them, they remained in conversation with the reformers of Basel, Schaffhausen, St. Gall, and especially Strasbourg. They were clearly the left wing of the very same movement using the same Bible and the same language, and moving in the same circles.

It is not our present concern, but it confirms the typology, to observe that the same thing happens again and again. In Britain the seventeenth-century radical reformers were not a transplantation of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, but rather both the Baptists and the Quakers arose out of the radicalizing of the Calvinist Puritan movement. Both the concern for proper church order which resulted in origins of the "Particular Baptists" and the concern for a valid inner experience which culminated in Quakerism were the products of radicalized Puritanism much more than of borrowing from he Lollards or the Dutch Mennonites.

The same is the case once more with "Anabaptism" on the American frontier. Although other streams of population flowed into the movement, the source of the Restoration movement was radicalized presbyterianism, in its concern for the proper pattern of church order according to the Bible. As Richard Hughes and I have indicated elsewhere,[2] Anabaptist and Calvinistic understandings of restitution vary precisely at this point. The Calvinists' vision of restitution is more concerned for restoring the details of church order. Campbell was at this point a radicalized Calvinist.

What has been said above in terms of personal and group genetic relationship must also be said on the level of theological drive. In their debates with the official Reformation, the Anabaptists applied the principle of *sola scriptura* not only to the question of soteriology but also to the questions of ecclesiology and social ethics. In those debates, the Reformed reformers said scripture is not to be applied in those areas, because with Constantine and Justinia we have moved beyond the phase of holy history which the New Testament describes.

The Anabaptists applied the principle of *sola fide* not only to justification but also to epistemology; i.e., they called into question their reliance on the notions of the revelation of social ethics through reason and nature, which become all important when one claims that the orders of creation give us more valid guidance in ethics than do the words and the work of Jesus.

Since the reformers were debating among themselves and with Catholicism, they never had to face this problem in their classical self-image; but if one asks what the concept of revelation is that underlies reformed social ethics at the points where it differs from the Anabaptists, one thing becomes clear: a level of trust in reason and in nature is being affirmed which fits poorly with what is said about human reason at other points in the Reformed system.

The Reformed image of the Anabaptist is that of a fanatic wanting to derive all of theology from his denial of the sword. The Anabaptist picture of Reformed theology is of Zwingli's and Bucer's having started out a process of testing everything by Scripture, and then having pulled back from the radical implications of that testing when it was discovered that the post-Constantinian adjustment of the Church to her close symbiosis with the rulers would have to be tested.

Two Perspectives Then and Now

What has been said here in sixteenth-century terms can also be played back, in another key, regarding the present. The Reformed vocabulary and the Reformed thought patterns have largely set the tone for WASP theological culture in our time. This means that any American Mennonite who learns to read has some awareness of the Reformed thought structure. If he thinks theologically he becomes aware of his own position in the encounter with Reformed mainstream thought. This is further fostered by the fact (which I cannot fully explain) that between 1910 and 1970, when North American Mennonite students went off to doctoral study, they tended more often to go to Reformed institutions than to Anglican, Lutheran, secular, Catholic, or Methodist universities. Thus, whether consciously or not, and whether with intellectual independence or alienating subservience, most North American Mennonites understand Reformed thought patterns. In fact, many of them understand an intrinsically Anabaptist or New Testament logic less clearly than they do the Reformed thought patterns of their graduate educational context.[3]

On the other hand, there are no Anabaptist graduate schools to which a Reformed scholar could go; and, if they existed, a Reformed scholar would not go there. The few Reformed thinkers who have some notion of what a conversation with Anabaptist thought would be about are those (like Mouw) who have taken it up with a special sense of the reasons for doing so.

So far I have been making formal observations in order to locate our agenda. Before I proceed to the agenda, I will briefly give other reasons for challenging the usefulness of giving priority to this dichotomy:

A. It leaves out many components of the evangelical coalition: Lutherans, whose concern for the law/gospel dialectic puts this entire debate in another light; pietists, who affirm a spirit/world dualism different both from the Anabaptist faith/unfaith dualism and from the Reformed visions of church/world unity; evangelicals within other denominations, who intentionally have no ecclesiastical shape for a distinctive ethos; Anglicans, Brethren and Bible Church types for whom this entire debate is off the subject. Wes-

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leyans and Adventists have still other handles on the social agenda.

B. Although coalition building is important for "evangelicals," as far as social involvement is concerned, neither the Reformed nor the Anabaptist stance is tied one-to-one to "evangelical" assumptions about biblical authority or regeneration. One can very well be either Reformed or Anabaptist about social involvement and not concerned to prove oneself evangelical.

C. The need to be on record as rejecting "anabaptist separatism" has led some to be less critical of the powers that be than their theology would call for. The non-anabaptist "just war" tradition intends to provide relevant restraint on nationalistic violence; but for how many evangelicals has it done that? Many are more attached to disavowing pacifism than to disciplining nationalism. Therefore, the recent espousal of a "just war pacifism" with regard to nuclear arms by many non-pacifist believers is a striking development.

D. To speak in formal terms, there is a conflict between the systematician's task and the historian's. To use types derived from history without being subject to proving at what points their historical rootedness is verified, mixes two disciplines. The person using types systematically feels responsible to be selectively anachronistic, assuming from that confessed past only those elements still considered relevant. It is hard for any twentieth-century Christian to advocate the control of the church by civil government, the civil repression of religious dissent, or the imposition upon dissenters of the social views of the particular reformer who has the ear of the civil ruler. (These items are in fact what was at stake when in the 1520s the Reformed movement in Zurich divided.) These items are not what the modern Reformed thinker who rejects Anabaptism wants to favor. But the socio-theological type has been divorced from history. The Mennonite, Quaker or Sojourner is not granted the same liberty to disentangle his socio-theological axioms from the empirical options available to his ancestors—or even from the options of other "radicals" who were not his ancestors at all, but to whom the authors of the protestant creeds chose also to attach the label "Anabaptist."

If I reject as improper a picture of polarity between the Reformed and the Anabaptist thought patterns, am I then under the obligation to propose another image? I am not sure that I should; but if I had to, it would begin with an alternative historical scenario, imagining some adaptation of the original Anabaptist picture of a pilgrimage toward reformation which we began together. But then those who made their peace with the state structures solidified in the 1520s, and the doctrinal structures that solidified between 1532 and 1550 simply did not go "all the way" with the Reformation. What this "all the way" would have been, if the less radical "state church" brethren had been willing to go farther, is not identical with what the Anabaptists wound up doing, since the element of separation which was involved in their "going farther" was not of their own will. Not being able to describe the difference between stopping part way and going all the way in terms of the sixteenth-century model of separation as it was forced upon men like Sattler, I suppose the more adequate model would be seen in the British experience.

Some Calvinist thinking permeated the original established Anglican movement, especially in the age of Edward, with the presence of Calvin's own theological father Martin Bucer; but it could not be contained there. It moved into an early Presbyterianism, intrinsically willing to break with the official Episcopal structure, although that break took a long time to be consummated. It went beyond that into Congregationalism, still nourished by the theology and the biblicism of Calvin. Although they "went farther" formally, even then the congregationalists were still Calvinists in their hermeneutic approach, believing that they found in the New Testament a congregational pattern to be applied. Since it had to be applied, and could be applied by the sovereign, it should apply to all Christians in England. Therefore there was nothing separatist about that kind of Independents. All the way to the most independent party in the Westminster parliament, this assumption remains. As Baptists and Quakers pushed biblical radicality to the point of cutting their ties with the civil government, they still took this further step without breaking the momentum or the continuity of their Calvinist identity. They continued to assume and to affirm that there is one proper form which God wants his people to have, and that this form can be known and realized. Since every Christian should adopt this form, to advocate it is not sectarian or schismatic. Thus they continued to agree with Calvin against Luther, for whom all such matters of form are flexible or adiaphora, and against the Catholic views for which the desirable structure is the one which has continued to evolve over the centuries, with the assistance of the powers of this world.

Perhaps a Calvinist or a Lutheran needs, for reasons which can be defined theologically, to be faithful to his founder. The descendants of churches once led by Menno do not.

E. Favoring models from the heroic generation of founder-fathers may seriously skew considerations having to do with continuity, evolution, and necessary mid-course corrections. Both Reformed and Anabaptist tend to decry the development of body/spirit dualisms, sometimes called (with questionable accuracy) "pietism." But maybe some such adjustments are necessary parts of any movement that lives more than fifty years. Might it be intrinsically improper to use *any* first generation model as a base-line for categorizing or for guiding ongoing communities?

F. The issue of scriptural authority is not dealt with in the same way for all who would call themselves Reformed or Anabaptist. Yet many in both camps, and all of them in the sixteenth century, claimed to expositing the test of Scripture. For both, there were issues of hermeneutic method which took priority over and underlay the differences in ethics. We do an injustice to both parties in the dialog when we *then* deal with them first as different social approaches. For the Reformed, all the Bible stood on the same level of authority and usefulness, so Joshua and Josiah were valid models of Christian social responsibility. For the Anabaptists, the movement from the Old Testament to the New was a necessary implication of their Christology and applied to the civil realm as well as to the ritual. For the Reformers, the theologian's task was dependent on the authority and the university-taught rhetorical and linguistic expertise of the rulers. The Anabaptists were ready to entrust the hermeneutic operation to the Holy Spirit operating in the gathered community, with the linguist only one among the gifted members. There were also differences about the hermeneutic authority of the ecumenical councils and the fathers, as to whether the work of Jesus was relevant to the social realm, and as to the knowability of the will of God through "nature" and "reason," etc.

Our model from the British experience gives us a picture of a continuum of reforming initiatives, each standing on the shoulders of the one which went before it. No one of them is intrinsically sectarian, for each step along the way can be taken with the conviction that all true Christians can join in taking it. The congregationalists who argued on the basis of particular biblical texts and models that each local congregation should be formally responsible for its own order were simply carrying to its logical conclusion a doctrine already stated by Luther and Zwingli in 1523. This did not need to mean a break with all other Christians nor even with government, since government (Cromwell) could properly understand its task as being to support that kind of church. In the age of Cromwell and in New England it was obvious that congregationalism did not mean any break with the Christian civil authority.

Thus, no single step of fuller radicality in reformation is intrinsically sectarian. The least we can say about the divisions of 1525 is that Zwingli, who broke off the small-scale conversations and appealed to the civil power, was as responsible for the separation as were those who refused to let the conversation be decided on that level. If that appeal is not to be permitted to stop the conversation, or if the peculiar social situation (as in England) does not permit the civil power to stop the conversation, then the form the

reformation may take (while continuing to become more thorough) must be projected apart from its needing to produce separation within the churches. That is the matter I would like to see apply still today, if Reformed brethren would agree that we are carrying on a conversation within the same league, rather than beginning a priori by their boxing me into a position already rejected by their creeds.

One last cavil before moving to the polarity proper. The very value of holding to a *type* of theology, and of stating it in a confessional document, is perceived differently in the two families. The political function of a confession in the sixteenth century was not separable from its truth claim. That made it unavoidably a virtue that evolution from there on should be conservative. Everyone said "*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*," but the parameters of the ongoing reformation could not reach past what was already defined. From the other perspective, it is not clear, or at least it would need to be explained for each time and each issue, why trueness to type should be a virtue. Perhaps a Calvinist or a Lutheran needs, for reasons which he can define theologically, to be faithful to his founder. The descendants of churches once led by Menno do not. By the nature of the case the tradition of the sixteenth century is not normative in the free church style. The free church tradition is also a *tradition*, so that guidance is also received from the past. But the *way* that guidance is received is much less firmly structured, and much less concerned for fidelity to any particular father.

Insofar as one particular "father" is recognized in the free church family as exemplary or as more interesting than other predecessors, a recognition which I affirm for Cheltchitski and Fox and Mack no less than for Sattler and more than for Menno, it is I who affirm that congeniality; and I, within my contemporary accountability to contemporary churches, therefore remain free to define the *tertium quid* which makes his witness congenial and interesting to my time and place. I have no commitment to detailed fidelity at those particular points of the view of one of those "fathers" of which Guy de Bres happened particularly to disapprove or to choose to take as typical.

The Typology Challenged

I have stated "from the outside" my doubts about the Reformed/Anabaptist polarity as inherited. Now I move on to test it "from the inside." I now set forth the discrepancy of structure between the two approaches as the typology seems to demand. To do so I shall characterize the Reformed position in the form of those theses which seem to be indispensable for its own coherence (and not to be acceptable from my perspective). It will not work to do it the other way around, by starting with Anabaptist theses, because the Reformed definition of the Anabaptist theses will appear to the

If I understand the Reformed argument on these matters, it is, first, that *the cultural mandate is univocal.*

When I say the cultural mandate is *univocal*, this means there is no serious debate as to the substance of moral obligation. It is only when we can assume everyone knows what is called for that it becomes possible to say that the only debate is whether to do it. Just as long as there are alternate readings of what is called for, then the interlocutor who refuses to do what I interpret to be culturally mandated is not rejecting the mandate as such by my interpretation of its content. The Reformed do not say that the Anabaptists misinterpret the cultural mandate but that they deny it. This only makes sense if that mandate's content is univocally that which the Anabaptist refuses to do. This is very obvious in the classical discussion of this theme by H. Richard Niebuhr. The single sentence in *Christ and Culture* which refers to the Mennonites says that they are opposed to culture *because they operate their own schools.* It would not occur to you to say that Calvinists are opposed to culture because they operate their own schools.[4] To be doing something different about education is still to be doing something about education and not negating it. Even the Old Order Amish, who wish for their children the freedom from the civil obligation to attend *high* schools in the *city*, do this not because they are opposed to education but because they are committed to a different context and content of education, whose total cultural meaning is more coherent with their faith.[5]

Second, one must say that the cultural mandate is *monolithic.* This is my label for the logical procedure which says that to be consistent, one must take the same attitude with regard to every segment of culture. In this way of reasoning, Richard Niebuhr says that Tertullian was inconsistent because on the one hand he rejected Roman imperial violence (thereby against culture), and yet he made very good use of the Latin language (in favor of culture). The common person looking at this argument would say that Tertullian should have the freedom to discriminate within culture, accepting some elements and rejecting others; but it is obvious that Richard Niebuhr considers this to be cheating, since to be consistent one ought to do the whole thing with culture as a whole. According to this understanding of the cultural mandate, it is an offense in logic and perhaps even in morality when the Anabaptist is willing to take more responsibility for some elements of culture than for others. Where I would see ethical selectivity as the essence of responsibility for limited resources in a diaspora situation, my Calvinist brother sees it as a culpable inconsistency.

The third general thesis of the Reformed stance, as I seek to understand it (despite my not being convinced by it), is that *the civil order is the quintessence of the cultural mandate.* The cultural mandate has many dimensions (family, the economy, education, the arts, communication) but they are not all of equal clarity and centrality. The civil order is the one on which the others all depend; the sovereignty of the other spheres is more relative. Both historically and philosophically, both in modern terms and in the sixteenth century, the bearers of the civil responsibility lead the community in all the other realms as well. The other realms have a degree of autonomy which the rulers delegate to them; it is not intrinsic. This is not only the case because rulers in fact do rule. It is by nature or by divine right that the sanctions of which the civil sovereign disposes are properly to be used to reinforce the virtues of the other realms.

This thesis is indispensable to the Reformed position, since it is only at the point of the sword of the civil ruler that there is any difference with the Anabaptist in acceptance of the cultural mandate. Yet the Reformed accuses the Anabaptist of refusing that mandate in toto.

The fourth thesis identifies a still further narrowing: *the sword is the quintessence of the civil order.* Again the argument may be based either on historical realism or on an understanding of the divine mandate. A civil order without the sword is not a better civil order but a defective one. This is to deny in principle the possibility of a progressive minimizing of the violence of the sanctions of the state and a progressive dismantling of the lethal sanctions of the state through considerations of social contract and checks and balances. It denies the vision of peace as the *prima ratio* of government, as held to by Catholicism, by liberalism, or by Karl Barth.

This narrowing is again essential for the logic of the polar debate to stand. If and when the civil order is understood as the implementation of the social contract, as the administration of public welfare, as the dialogical formulation of public policies, or as the execution of policies serving the common weal, there is no controversy. It is only at the point of the sword that classically there is a debate. The discussion is not about democratization, or about socialism as an option in the political economy. Nor is the debate about fraud, cheating, cronyism and classism, lying and defamation, and all other standard human vices which the civil realm shares with the realms of business and the university, but which are not its definition.

Fifth, in making this identification between the sword and the civil order, the Reformed tradition, if I understand it, also *fuses creation and the fall.* This observation is so important that I must return to it later. An unfallen earthly society would certainly need a civil order to make decisions and to apportion tasks and resources. But it would not need a sword. The sword is at the very best the reaction of the fallen order under Providence to the fallenness of its citizens. There is no ground in the biblical doctrine of the fall to argue that the hand that bears the sword or the order that defends itself by the sword is any less fallen than the offender against whom the sword is used. Once again, this thesis is indispensable for the Reformed position. It is only at the point of the sword that the Anabaptists denied the call to share in the administration of the created order. From the beginning they accepted non-combatant

civil duties. Pilgrim Marbeck, the leading thinker of the movement from 1530, earned his living as a civil engineer.

Sixth, it must be assumed that *the sword is available to the believers*. It is meaningless to discuss whether the Christian may properly be a ruler, if that option is practically excluded. Whereas the other axioms thus far identified are logical, this one is empirical, historical, and cultural. It must be possible, in some way deemed legitimate, for the Christian to accede to the possession of the sword, by hereditary royalty or nobility, by majority vote in a democracy, or by a justified revolution. Only when one or more of those is possible is the sword question other than of an hypothetical empty set.

In the early church, as in most of the world through most of history and today, that set is still empty. The Reformed statement of the issue makes "Christendom" assumptions which, if empirically valid sometimes, are on the same grounds inappropriate elsewhere.

This is an issue that needs more attention than it is getting today in the West. Nothing in the written laws keeps a Christian from running for candidacy in a democracy, but in reality there is much to keep a Christian with the substantial moral commitments that any Evangelical makes, from being very likely to be elected very often. The Reformed candidate who takes a position on *any* question (truth-telling, slavery, abortion...) such that he will not get elected, and the Anabaptist who will not get elected because his views concerning government's violence are rejected by the majority, differ only in detail, not in structure. Both are willing to let others run the government (except for those older pre-Cromwell Calvinists who affirmed aristocracy rather than democracy and were themselves aristocrats). The idea that "Anabaptist withdrawal" will abandon government to the bad guys, i.e., to non-believers, is silly. Democracy does this.[6]

The above six points are true by virtue of *a divine act of institution*. A specific divine decree created the institution of government. This is most meaningfully spoken of when the word "institution" is taken literally, in such a way that it would be possible to hypothesize a time (or an eternity) before the event of that institution, just as we can say that the *institution* of the Lord's supper took place at a given time in Jerusalem.

If we exercise our historical imagination, it is quite possible to understand what Christians in the middle ages of the sixteenth century were thinking about when they used such language as this. Even then, we need to ask whether this "institution" should be ascribed to the order of preservation or to some other covenant. What is usually referred to as the institution of civil government is reported in Genesis 9 after the flood rather than after the Fall in chapter 4. Thus, if we were to attempt to take seriously the orthodox Calvinist scheme of a series of covenants, the definition of government for all humankind comes not even right after the Fall but only with Noah. "Creation" then is hardly the word for it.[7]

But not all of us have the historical imagination or the playfulness to attempt to discuss a matter like this in terms borrowed from the seventeenth century. It is anachronistic to replace "institution" with the idea that a need for or inclination toward certain orders is part of human nature, without seriously questioning how much of this can be retrieved and carried over into a more contemporary post-enlightenment historical awareness.

Eighth, all of this information is *known to us by revelation*. But again, the argument is not always clear. Sometimes the revelation in question is the natural revelation accessible to reason. Other times the revelation in question is the special revelation of a few biblical texts on the subject. These two kinds of revelation may be held to coincide completely, or one may be ascribed greater precision or greater generality than the other.

To try to take seriously theses seven and eight in the modern world, we must remember that what is being debated is not whether there is or whether there needs to be social organization, but whether it is the will of God that one nation should fight another or that one man should oppress or destroy another in the name of divine right.

When we look specifically at this question, at least the following limitations to the applicability of these theses must be recorded:

a) Romans 13 affirms the acceptance by the apostolic church of the existence of a *pagan* government in which Christians had no responsible decision-making possibilities or duties. When they logically derived from this observation a duty to be *subject* to government, one may not with legitimate logic draw from their statements a duty to administer government. It could not have been a duty when it was not even a possibility.

b) There is a considerable difference in local situations so that involvement-in-tension in one place, moderate involvement in another, and uninvolved witness in another might all be expressive of the same basic ethical view. When Menno Simons said a Christian can be in government if he does not apply the death penalty, and Michael Sattler said a Christian cannot be in government because it does apply the death penalty, they did not necessarily have different views of Christian ethics. They may have been responding to different experiences of government.

That the Anabaptist reject all concern for the civil order is not a fact of history but rather a defamatory statement in the Reformed confessions. In what other area is the historian still ready to take at face value the description of dissenters as stated by their persecutors? It is true that in circumstances where they had no significant access to such decision making as could change the nature of the civil order, certain Anabaptists did affirm in light of Romans 13 that the civil order, even when it persecuted them, was still within the divine plan and that their participation in it was none the less not desirable. But as I have attempted to demonstrate, that position is not a sweeping generalization but rather the application for a given situation of a broader attitude toward society which is not fundamentally dualistic.

c) The most that the Genesis texts can authorize is punishment of death by death. There is no logical extension of this (in the texts) to cover the use of civil sanctions for any other crime but bloodshed. Nor does it determine who is the legitimate claimant to that punitive function: it assumes legitimacy but does not adjudicate it. Even less could it authorize war beyond the limits of a given sovereign's territory.

Creation, Fall and Preservation

Above, I observed the mixture of appeals in Reformed views of the state. That there must be order is a created mandate; but that it must wield the sword is not. The fusion of creation and Fall is not merely an imprecision. It is a logically illegitimate move whereby a number of substantial assumptions are smuggled in without examination.

First, the Fall makes a difference in the empirical order of society which is no longer wholesome and mutually supporting. To the extent to which "the order of nature" is an order which can be perceived within the structures of nature, this "knowability" is compromised if not lost.

Second, the human mind in its capacity to know the truth, however that truth be understood (special revelation, empirical nature, speculative nature), is distorted by the Fall. My capacity and desire to know the truth are distorted by my desire to use the truth for my own purposes and my desire to avoid those parts of the truth with which I disagree.

Even if in some sense it could be held that the truth remains essentially unconfused despite the Fall, and my ability to perceive it were not radically destroyed, there still remains the flaw in my will which no longer desires to obey but prefers to use the arena of history to act out my rebelliousness, my will to power, and my hostility to my brother.

Even if my will were unfallen and my knowledge were unfallen, my ability to control the course of events would no longer be whole. The chain of causation, the structures of the social order, communication and decision making are fallen as well.

A further change is on the epistemological level. When we speak seriously of the moral obligation derived from creation we can assume the univocality of the divine will. God's purpose is the same for all because all are in the same situation with the same potential

and the same function. After the Fall and especially after the conditional divine interventions classically referred to as the covenant with Adam and the covenant with Noah (a situation still further complicated by further covenants between then and now), that univocality is gone by definition. There is no self-evident reason to assume that the will of God has the same meaning for a Jew as for a Gentile in the age of Moses, when tabernacle worship and circumcision are not expected of the nations.[8] There is no self-evident reason to assume that the obligations of Christians and pagans are the same in the New Testament when one decides and acts within the reestablished covenant of grace and the other does not. There is no reason to have to assume that the moral performance which God expects of the regenerate he equally expects of the unregenerate. Of course, on some much more elevated level of abstraction, our minds demand that we project an unique and univocal ultimate or ideal will of God. But it is precisely in the nature of his patience with fallen humanity that God condescends to deal with us on other levels. The well-intentioned but uninformed heathen, the informed but rebellious child of the believer, the regenerate but ignorant, the educated victim of heretical teaching, the teacher, and the bearer of a distinct charisma all stand in different moral positions.

On the level of normative social ethical discourse, this awareness means that the substance of the Christian testimony to a pluralistic social order will not be identical with the claims of discipleship for the disciples of Jesus Christ; a relevant moral witness to the authorities in a Western democracy will be different from that to a pagan monarch. There is not one timeless pattern of pertinent social norms. The hermeneutic we need must be dialogical and congregational, renouncing claims to leverage from outside the historical flux.

A Personal Epilogue

There is one more level upon which one can attempt to gain hold on the substance of a debate. One can ask very subjectively, "Do they understand me? Do they speak to me?"

When I ask whether I am understood, my answer is, "not really." I perceive that I am being read and heard through a filter, whether I meet that in historical terms as the definition of Anabaptism which is in the Reformed confessions, or whether I identify it in logical content as the axioms stated above.

The other question is whether the alternative view which is being commended to me has something from which I can learn, because it appeals to the New Testament or to some other independent reference in a way that reaches past established confessional differences to or from the New Testament. Thus far this is not the case. What I hear my Reformed interlocutor asking me to accept is not some particular biblical text or even some particular biblical theme[9] but rather a system of definitions adding up more or less to the same thing as the axioms stated above.

There is a strange ambivalence in that criticism. On the one hand, I am told that I am wrong because my position implies a systematic dualism and total withdrawal from the social struiggle, and it is wrong to withdraw from the social struggle.

But then when I say I also consider it wrong to withdraw from social struggle because Jesus was "politically" involved, as were William Penn and Martin Luther King, Jr., I get two contradictory answers. One is that I am logically cheating because I ought to want to withdraw according to the Reformed image of what my position implies. I do not defend their image of what I ought to believe. Instead of seeing that as a challenge to the accuracy of their image, they challenge my representativity. The other is that they wish I would withdraw, because they do not want my Jesus and me in the real arena with real alternatives. They want me to affirm the irrelevance which is their a priori pigeonhole for me (and, more importantly, for the Jesus of the Gospels). My acceptance of withdrawal as the price of my faithfulness is needed for them to explain lesser-evil calculations as the price of the "responsible involve-

[1] Article XXXVI; article XXXII uses the same phrase with regard to baptism. We set that aside for present purposes: millions of Baptists are Reformed in their social ethics, showing that the link between ecclesiology and social strategy is not always close.

[2] Cf. my *The Priestly Kingdom* (Notre Dame University Press, 1984) p. 131f.

[3] Add to this anomaly the awareness that the sociology of the ethnic enclave, typical of most Mennonite experience from 1650 to 1950, is a form of establishment, rather than an implementation of the radical missionary vision.

[4] Nicholas Wolterstorff characterizes Mennonites as seeking to create "a holy commonwealth in a separated area" (*Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, Grand Rapids, 1983, p. 19); an inappropriate reference especially in lectures presented in Amsterdam, where Mennonites since 1600 have typically been about as separated as Quakers in Philadelphia. Another specimen—to demonstrate how widely abused is the typology—is an interview in the *NRC-Handelsblad*, the Dutch equivalent of the *Wall Street Journal*, 29 November 1984, in which A. M. Oostlander, research director of the Christian party (CDA), claims that the InterChurch Peace Council (IKV) represents "an ancient dutch phenomenon with deep roots in national history," namely the Anabaptist movement, which "turned its back on government." Oostlander is wrong on every count. a) The IKV is made up mostly of non-pacifists, mostly Reformed and Roman Catholic, who under the pressure of actions taken by the Reformed Church of the Netherlands since 1952 is critical of the nuclear arms race policies of NATO; b) The Anabaptists of the sixteenth century did not turn their back on government; government outlawed them and burned them at the stake; c) What Oostlander dislikes about the IKV is not that it turns its back on government but that it is becoming politically powerful. This is thus an excellent specimen of the way in which, far from using historical types as an instrument of authentic ecumenical communication, the reproach of Anabaptism is a tool of intra-Reformed polemics.

[5] Franklin H. Littell: "The Radical Reformation and the American Experience" in Thomas M. McFadden, ed., *America in Theological Perspective* (New York, Seabury, 1976), pp. 71-86; and "Christian Faith and Counter-Culture," *The Iliff Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, Winter 1973, pp. 3–13.

[6] I have been watching with interest the Reformed social think tanks at Grand Rapids, Pella, Toronto and elsewhere for some years now. What is most striking to me is the absence of any head-on recognition that if one recognizes or even advocates democracy, as it exists in pluralistic North Atlantic society, the classical theocratic language of the Reformed vision is more anachronistic than is the "sectarian" language of the Anabaptist model. As Nicholas Wolterstorff wrote, "In one way we have all become Anabaptist . . ., the sixteenth-century Anabaptists urged the abolition of a sacral society... That heritage of Anabaptism is the policy we all embrace . . ." (*Reformed Journal*, October 1977, p. 11). To negate "sacral society" is vaguer and easier than to affirm democracy, which Wolterstorff would also do, but either way is to say it lets other people run the place.

[7] Meredith Kline sees JHWH's threat to avenge any attack on Cain (Gen. 4:15) as an earlier version of the same revelation. That would bring us one covenant earlier, but still would be a salvation-historical intervention (Kline calls it "oracle") rather than an order of creation knowable to reason. It does not (like the Noachic covenant) name man as the executor of JHWH's vengeance. It would authorize only punitive vengeance, none of the other functions of the civil order. It would call literally for the vengeance taken to be collective, i.e., sevenfold. It would make the escalation of human autonomy through city-building and technology to the war cry of Lamech look like a fulfillment of JHWH's intent. It would make no difference to the question of what the New Covenant in Jesus' blood does with Genesis and Moses. Nonetheless, Kline's effort to found the notion of a divorce mandate for the civil order is more serious than most.

[8] Since the adjustment to the Jewish-Christian schism, whereby rabbinic thought largely abandoned "mission" to the "Christians," it is generally affirmed that gentiles can have access to "the world to come" if they live according to the Noachic covenant. Cf. David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism*, Toronto, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 1983.

[9] With the exception of Meredith Kline, note 8 above.

Abandoning the Typology: A Reformed Assist

by Richard J. Mouw

Professor Yoder thinks that the differences between Anabaptist and Reformed Christians have been rather consistently misrepresented, especially on the part of Reformed thinkers. He demonstrates his convictions regarding these matters by means of two strategies. First, he argues that the common notion that the Reformed-Anabaptist cultural-theological debate constitutes a "classical dilemma" does not provide us with the best account of the historical developments bearing on these disputes. Then, having offered this argument "from the outside," he moves "inside" the discussion. Here he argues that if the issues at stake are properly construed, then Reformed criticisms of the Anabaptists often miss the mark; Reformed people, in attempting to make an effective case against the Anabaptist cultural perspective, would have to provide different sorts of arguments than they seem to think are necessary.

I am in basic agreement with Professor Yoder on these matters. This is not to say that I have become an Anabaptist. But I do endorse, in general terms, his account of the actual shape of the debate between the two camps. The continuing differences between the two groups ought to be understood, I am convinced, along the lines he suggests.

On a number of occasions I have protested against what I have labelled, for lack of a better terms, the "Mennophobia" of many of

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