Radical Orthodoxy and the Radical Reformation: What is Radical about Radical Orthodoxy?

Participants
A. James Reimer, Conrad Grebel University College
and Toronto School of Theology, *Chair*
John Milbank, University of Virginia

Panelists
Chris K. Huebner, Candian Mennonite University
Laura Schmidt Roberts, Graduate Theological Union
Gerald W. Schlabach, University of St. Thomas
Malinda E. Berry, Union Theological Seminary (NY)
P. Travis Kroeker, McMaster University

Jim Reimer:
Today's conversation with John Milbank on Radical Orthodoxy is another instance of the attempt of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre to further ecumenical dialogue. We are pleased and honored that John Milbank is with us, to talk and converse with us, about the relation of Radical Orthodoxy to the Radical Reformation.

John Milbank:
It's a great pleasure and honor to be with you this morning. My remarks are going to be of a very general and suggestive nature – nothing terribly well worked out, and I'm going to base them largely on a response to Jim Reimer's own book on the Mennonites and classical philosophy [*Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics* (2001)]. The first thing, and perhaps the most important thing, to say is that I completely agree with the comments by Stanley Hauerwas on the back cover of Jim's book: that one of the most important issues facing theology and the Church today is the relationship between Catholicism, in the broadest sense, and the Radical Reformation.

I'd like to make a footnote, from somebody coming from a British perspective. I think there are two things that are interesting. One is the idea that there's a sort of dialectic between the Radical Reformation and Catholicism. This is actually borne out socio-historically in Britain. The very Yorkshire

valleys where the pilgrimage of people marching down in protest against the dissolution of the monasteries (this is also associated with social radicalism) – those very valleys that produced that reaction by the end of the seventeenth century were dominated by Quakerism. It's as if they completely rejected the individualism of the magisterial reformation. First of all it's Catholic, later it's a Radical Reformation. So I agree about this dialectic.

The second comment from a British point of view is that for a long time such a dialogue has existed in Britain. . . . The Catholic wing of the Anglican Church at the end of the nineteenth century developed a radical socialist wing. Perhaps the most famous among the members was the great Sinologist, Joseph Needham, who was an Anglo-Catholic and for some time a communist, and always a socialist and always a supporter of Chairman Mao. But Needham was also very interested in the British radical reformation, and wrote articles about the Levellers and Diggers and the relationship between science and radicalism in the English Civil War. So already there's that tension and dialogue between Catholicism and the Radical Reformation; it's very much in the tradition that I come out of and it ultimately lies behind Radical Orthodoxy.

Why, though, is this relationship now important? I think that it's best illustrated by Reimer's work itself. On the one hand, we need to recover the idea that classical orthodox doctrine has the most radical implications for human transformation and social transformation; on the other hand, we need to conjoin that to a radical practice. We need to find almost a kind of monasticism for everybody, a way for the laity more to manifest, in a radical, social, and personal practice, the implications of Christianity. Reimer is right to slightly modify at times the utopianism of the Anabaptist tradition, the idea that somehow now suddenly on earth there is already realized the perfect kingdom at the end of time. He's also right to insist on a little less duality between utopianism and eschatology. Augustine certainly does allow that progress is possible, but he's sometimes a little too static about the possibilities of actually transforming social and personal structures that embody sin and fallenness. We need a little more of the idea of an anticipation of the eschaton, and at this point we can learn from the Radical Reformation.

So I broadly welcome the direction that Reimer's work is taking, and it represents the work of other people as well. I'd certainly like to see an even stronger engagement with modern Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox

thought in its best representatives. That's a little more [valuable] than attention to Tillich. I understand the reasons for attending to Tillich, and why Reimer wants to balance Barth in that way. I would rather get authors other than Tillich, but that's a relatively minor point.

Much more important, and one of the main challenges I intend to pose, is this: If you're going to say, We're going to appropriate the mainlines of the tradition and accept the formulas of the Church councils, the mainlines of Christian belief, Anselm and Aquinas and so on, is it really consistent with that to remain non-Episcopalian? I want to suggest that it isn't, and that the best road forward for a movement like the Mennonites is to rejoin the main Episcopal tradition. The reason it's inconsistent is that embracing doctrinal orthodoxy is linked, in Reimer's thought, to a recognition of the importance of what is always being believed everywhere, and therefore to a kind of democracy of time, if you'd like to put it that way. Therefore, it is related to what I call the "educative hierarchy of time." Christian hierarchy, the hierarchy talked about by Dionysus, is not a kind of static, spatial hierarchy. We're born as children, we have first to learn. If we're going to be good democrats in the end, we have to first learn virtues; that's why education is linked to democracy. There's something about transmission through time that is linked to this idea of hierarchy. Really, that's what episcopacy is about, although it's been distorted. That's what it should be about. Also, if you don't embrace episcopacy, you don't embrace the hierarchy that's actually linked to the Eucharist. It's like Jean-Luc Marion says: *the bishop is the true theologian*. Why? Because the bishop celebrates the Eucharist, not because Marion is some kind of authoritarian.

The point, then, is that it's the Eucharist, the sacramental signs, that are at the top of the hierarchy. The bishop's position is linked to the celebration of the Eucharist, the fact that he represents a particular place, the Cathedra, the seat of tradition, and continuity in time and place. He stands for that, and then it's an interplay between the democracy of time and the transmission and, finally, the authority of the congregation. By far the best place to look for all this – I think Oliver O'Donovan agrees with me – is Nicholas of Cusa's great work, *The Catholic Concordance*, where he blends this traditional Dionysian hierarchy with a kind of proto-modern democracy in a most remarkable way, so that in the end it's always the whole church that's most authoritative (from a point of perspective, because human beings in body

rank below the angels). Within that, there's a certain guardianship of the real whole unity of humanity in time, by the bishops and by the church hierarchy.

One of the great problems about radical thought is that we don't think through the problem of hierarchy. In liberal societies, in socialist societies, hierarchy never disappears. It can't disappear. So, if you don't think through the positions for a good hierarchy, you always get bad hierarchy, and Presbyterianism and Congregationalism tend to generate worse tyrannies. What we really need is a right thinking through of the role of episcopacy. You have to understand the Radical Reformation historically. By the end of the Middle Ages, the whole business of episcopacy and so on had been totally debased into a formal hierarchy. The whole primacy of the Eucharist . . . had been lost sight of. In those conditions, one needed to make that protest.

The direction of Reimer's thought is towards understanding the contextuality of the Radical Reformation. But once you've done that in relation to doctrine, then you have to do it in relation to church hierarchy and sacrament mentality. It's also quite significant that in Britain and Europe you increasingly find movements like Methodism have moved back. Most Methodists like myself (I was brought up a Methodist) have rejoined the Anglican church; my parents became *both* Methodist *and* Anglican. In Europe, where secularization has gone further – and that's the way it's going eventually here (don't be deluded by people who tell you otherwise), you get more realism. Sometimes America is like a museum, a museum of Thomism, a museum of Anglicanism, a museum of the Radical Reformation, a museum of whatever. . . . Because it's so big and wealthy you can afford all those kinds of luxuries. But in the end secularization will get worse and Christians will have to unite. I suspect that the direction of unity is going to be the rejoining of the episcopal churches, the churches with a threefold order of ministry. You're [now] getting a kind of duality between the mainline churches all catholicizing and outside that, the house churches and mega-churches, and so on.

I welcome Reimer's interest in the relation of the Radical Reformation to questions of univocity, nominalism, and voluntarism in the later Middle Ages. . . . Just a quick remark about Oliver O'Donovan's interest in Wycliffe: The really significant thing about Wycliffe is that he wasn't a nominalist; he was a realist but also a very Platonic thinker. Wycliffe's social thought, which was also very radical, had him saying things like you could only have property by

grace but if you stop acting charitably, your property could be taken away from you. He thinks of grace in terms of participation, and his belief in universals is strongly linked to his belief in commonality. So, [there is a] link of a kind of social radicalism, a kind of continued neo-Platonic legacy, and at the same time a radically integrous theology of grace in Wycliffe. . . . He is another interesting aspect of the complexity of the reformation legacy, both in Britain and in Czechoslovakia, where you get the Wycliffe-Hus influence. You get a great qualification of the total nominalism. The mainline reformation is nominalist and voluntarist from beginning to end. It is qualified by elements in the Radical Reformation, and it also picks up on this older Wycliffe-Hus legacy.

Let me wind up with a few remarks about pacifism. Reimer's view about the need to accept policing is absolutely right, but here again I suggest you need to shift a little further. I agree that most modern wars can't be justified as police actions, they're way beyond that. Just War Theory is going to rule out-of-bounds most modern wars, not quite all of them. But in the Middle Ages, war often was really and truly a police action. I don't think the close distinction between war and policing holds up in the end. Once you've accepted some sort of coercion, you're no longer a pure pacifist. A pure pacifist is an anarchist. And that is an illogical position.

Of course, war is dangerous, it goes totally to the limits, but so does policing! The same dialectic is in danger in relation to policing. One of the problems (if you endorse policing) is that *war* is being described by our masters as "policing." So we need a discourse about minimal justified violence. If we don't have that, we won't be really radical. We have to stick to the idea that violence should be always minimized, that we need to develop nonviolent codes of resistance. Without the discourse of the minimal justification of violence, we don't really have a radical handle for criticizing what's going on at the moment.

I must say that the slight overdominance of peace in American radicalism, as compared to justice, is linked to American individualism and slight American over-purism. It's about the purity of individual motives in the end. . . . It seems that the thrust of Reimer's thought is away from these dangers, and I'm just urging him to push a little further. In some ways this whole pacifist thing is a kind of non-issue. I don't think that the early church or Jesus were pacifists in our sense; this is an anachronism. They don't really even pose the question. It's important to push further here. The first Quakers [and] the Münsterites weren't pacifist. In many ways, pacifism was for the

radical church – let's be frank – a tactic of survival. It was safer, if you were going to be so radical and go your own way, to say you were pacifist. That allowed people to leave you alone. So, I have a real problem. A real radicalism can't be dogmatically pacifist. Here it needs a little push in the direction Reimer is already going.

In what follows, Milbank was responding to presentations by panelists Chris Huebner, Laura Schmidt Roberts (a paper not printed here), Gerald Schlabach, Malinda Berry, and Travis Kroeker. –Editor

Reimer:
I'd like to allow Professor Milbank to take fifteen minutes to respond, which is almost an impossible task, I grant you. So do your best and select what you need to select, and then we can maybe have a few questions from the audience.

Milbank:
Thanks very much indeed to all those profound engagements with my book and the thought of some other people. . . . Obviously, as you can imagine, I tend to agree with some of the responses more than with some of the others.

First of all, [Chris Huebner's] question about **the voice of the theologian**. I now think the opening to [*The Word Made Strange*] is too hyperbolic, but I did say there that I thought it was tragic theology had become too important. In the Ecclesiology chapter in my new book, I try to explore the kind of aporia the church has legitimated by theology. Yet theology is always a reflection of the practice of the church. I'm unapologetic about trying to go beyond an over-simplistic priority of practice.

The point was raised that I don't say enough about **the collective authority of the church**. I talk about reason and tradition and the scripture. However, in fact I'm at pains to insist, especially when I'm talking about Nicholas of Cusa, that reason can only be collectively possessed in the end, that it is embodied. Also, my point about tradition is linked to the authority of the community. Community always exists in time as well as in space, and this has certain social and political implications. So I am trying to say a lot about the voice of the community.

The question about **continuity**. I fully accept I need to talk more about discontinuities and the need to link to, and to look back to, the origin.

[The issue of **consensus.**] I agree that you shouldn't too easily go for consensus. . . . Sometimes one individual who's really thinking clearly is the embodiment of the ecclesia rather than the apparent democratic consensus. The point about individual protest is very important. It's quite difficult to think all that through, and I'm not pretending I've done it adequately. Perhaps I could have said more about the sort of interaction between the official hierarchical guardians and protesters like the Franciscans or Dominicans, for example, calling the church back to its authentic vocation.

[In reference to Gerald Schlabach's criticism of Milbank's **stance on pacifism.**] I thought [those remarks were] an oversimplification of my critique of pacifism, which had many more strands. . . . I don't think anybody's a pacifist, to be really honest with you. It is important to look at the situation where somebody is threatened who should be protected, where somebody is being threatened in an unjust way. You don't stop to think. Nobody does. You intervene, even though at some level you know that if you can't control your intervention, it may go too far. My point about looking/non-looking is that if you go on looking, you do in fact intervene. If you don't, it becomes monstrous, and there's no way you could then have community afterwards with this innocent person whom you have not intervened to defend. Obviously, one can't turn away. You mustn't be sentimental. This has nothing to do with the real, strong record of the radical churches in all kinds of fields, and they may well have made a much greater contribution than mainline churches. I salute them for it. It doesn't effect the tough intellectual argument that I'm trying to make.

Another part of that argument is that I try to qualify what I said earlier in *Theology and Social Theory*, that it's absolutely true you can't really fight for the ultimate; in the end, you have to go the way of the cross. The things that we fight for are in a sense not the ultimate things, they're not worth defending— this is a point made by Augustine. On the other hand, all of the ultimate is only mediated by utterly fragile things. . . . To deny that we need to protect the fragile is like iconoclasm, so there's an exact parallel between pure pacifism and iconoclasm. [They both] miss the point that everything is always mediated. Yes, it's true that the unbreakable is what matters, and that's why it's ultimately the witness of the cross that counts. But the unbreakable for us is always mediated through the fragile.

Nobody who has read Charles Peguy's Christian Socialist treatise about Joan d'Arc, an incredibly serious engagement with the difficulties and the

ambiguity of this [issue], can make the sort of slightly self-righteous, pietistic comments we heard at the end. You cannot upbraid Peguy's *Mystery of the Charity of Joan d'Arc* – it's one of the profoundest Christian works written in the twentieth century. It also engages profoundly with the question of the relation of Christianity to Judaism, and the critique by Judaism of Christianity. One thing Peguy does is ask, Would Christ have been rejected in every age? On the other hand, would Christ have been accepted by anybody than the Jews? What he's engaging with here is the radical contemporality and contingency of the situation. He says we can't say a priori the way of the cross would be the right way in every circumstance. It is tied radically to history.

Donald McKinnon made rather similar points about this: There is a moment when the right way is the way of the cross. Yes, it's the ultimate eschatological moment, but in time you have to judge, you mustn't turn it into a Kantian a priori. This is why pure pacifism will too often take the mode of a kind of Kantian formalism. I'm not a Niebuhrian in any way. There aren't these two options. . . . This tends to be an American perspective: either pacifism or Machiavellian realism. I'm not saying like Niebuhr that there's no possibility of ever overcoming the necessity for violence. Collectively we can do that, in theory at least, and in fact we can get rid altogether of the necessity for violence. We can produce a perfect peace.

[Schlabach's] point about **the laity** was about what happens in the meantime, where people are not just involved in war but are [for instance] judges, or engaged in trade, or in policing processes. In the Middle Ages it was often said that by doing these things you're imperiling your soul and the safest thing is to stay outside them, in the monastery. Lay critics – people thinking about codes of chivalry, for example – said, You can't say there can be just wars yet people fighting these just wars are imperiling their souls more than monks. What kind of God sets things up that way? They made the same argument about sex. How can you say it's superior to be chaste, but it's okay to be involved in sex and you need it for the perpetuation of the human race? The argument of the chivalric writers is, How can God both will the perpetuation of the human race and say the way of celibacy is superior? This is my point about the laity's being mixed up in the bodily, in the erotic, and also at times – what the church is admitting – in the need for the coercive.

I was a little puzzled about getting into the details of **the history of slavery**, because I wasn't sure Malinda Berry's comments really ran against

what I was saying. I was trying to stress the role of gender in all this. Unless you see the role of gender and see that slaves have been defined in America as children of black women, you're missing how this came into being. One of the writers cited, Kathleen Brown, says that initially the definition of a slave has more to do with religion and the apparent rejection by Africans of Christianity than with color. The switch towards the color factor was strongly going on in the later seventeenth century. My point is something like this: There are awful things going on; the Klu Klux Klan wasn't there originally; and the fully-fledged most extreme and terrible racist ideology is something that emerges incrementally. The same applies to Nazism. I agree . . . that to ignore the fact that imperceptible steps may not seem so bad in themselves but [lead] to something really horrific is to ignore the links between the really terrible and our everyday awfulness. To mystify this as an unimaginable positive evil that's completely out of continuity with how we ordinarily behave – that's the point I'm getting at.

If evil is privative, obviously women cannot possibly be evil by nature, because that would be one example of a positive theory of evil – unless you're thinking of femaleness as itself a privated condition, a notion inherited from Aristotelian biology, which we should absolutely forget and reject. The interesting thing is that Aristotle asks, Is being male and female just like being like black and white? Is it accidental to humanity itself? Then he says the problem is that all animals are either male or female, or maybe a mixture of the two. So it seems as though sexual difference is generic. At that point he should become like Luce Irigaray and develop an ontology of sexual difference [as] I allude to near the end of my book.

[In reference to Travis Kroeker's remarks,] which I had some problems with, I nonetheless profoundly agree with the idea that the contribution of the Radical Reformation is that we have to think about our social organization and practice in this world in totally theological and christological terms.

Questions from Panelists and Audience

Tom Finger:
I'd like to go back to a point you raised at the beginning, that if Mennonites are into appropriating classical theology and the creeds, this leads, if we're consistent, to the acceptance of the episcopacy. For many of us that is the

problem with the creeds. . . . In a Mennonite understanding of the church, the church comes more from love, not just through people but the movement of the Holy Spirit, which moves where it will. This is often in continuity with tradition but not always, and sometimes rejects or rebukes what's in the tradition. This is where it comes from. So, if we do appropriate classical theology in some way, it is sometimes for different reasons. For instance, Nicea and Chalcedon [are] in many ways subversive of hierarchy. If Jesus is the normative human being, this means that his entire way of life, including his pacifism, is normative for everybody. One can say that in other ways. One can say that in Eastern Orthodoxy, one can recapitulate Lordship as kenotic lordship that subverts all other kinds of lordship. . . . A great deal of classical theology can be appropriated but, I think, critically.

Milbank:
I think hierarchy is kenotic. Even the neo-Platonic hierarchy is somewhat kenotic, because it's not our modern idea that [hierarchy means] you're a kind of "ruler." On the contrary, the idea is that to rule is to give the gift of ruling, that you have to share. This is the way Aquinas thinks; it's a gift. You have to delegate. The only real way to rule is to give ruling. This is, if you like, a kind of kenotic descent. . . . You can say, Hierarchies sound awful. But there are always going to be some kind of hierarchical structures. . . . I agree that all this is very paradoxical: the more you think about God, the more hierarchy is also levelled, totally levelled. It's relativized in relation to God.

Finger:
I'm not critiquing all hierarchy [but only when taken as] an ontological principle. . . . I believe that since Jesus was raised, he is Lord of all. It is a hierarchy, but a very different hierarchy, of a servant Lord.

Milbank:
I totally agree.

[Unidentified Questioner]:
I'm not sure you escape Niebuhrianism when you say no one is a pacifist. To be sure, I don't think pacifism in that sense is an ontological state. Pacifism is a practice. So, no one is a pacifist; people try, as it were, to live peacably and

engage in peaceful practices. On the other hand, you go on to say we must intervene. . . . It seems you have a notion of intervention that is so thin and univocal you can't imagine an intervention that might be something other than coercive.

Milbank:
Oh, yes. The principle of absolute minimum coercive means is important.

[Questioner]:
But don't you see yourself setting up these opposite purities? You say no to the pacifist, but then your countervailing state of facts says you must intervene. These seem to me totally pure opposites.

Milbank:
Only in extreme circumstances. In circumstances of immediate crisis, and these paradigmatic examples do have a certain valency, this is where I disagree with Stanley Hauerwas.

[Another Questioner]:
You commented that there's an exact parallel between iconoclasm and pacifism, and you went on to say that everything is always mediated with the fragile. I was struck by Travis Kroeker's example of the letter of the martyr to her daughter, and I'm puzzled as to why the martyr does not have iconic value for monasticism. You started out saying we need a kind of monasticism for everybody. In the early church, the monks did regard the martyrs as having iconic values, and I'm not quite sure how you can have a monasticism today that doesn't recognize the iconic value of martyrs in the church.

Milbank:
There are many different kinds of martyrs, but you could say that all martyrs are dying for the truth in some way. Like the cross itself, it's an interesting sort of an icon because it's a breaking of the icon. This is exactly why it's the ultimate icon, because it's a picture of *both* a fragile human life, Christ's life or the life of a martyr's, *and* the breaking of that life in witness. The witness says there is something beyond the fragile human things to which they point. The icons of the martyrs aren't the only kind of icons, they aren't the only

kind of pictures. That the martyr is a martyr because he has lived a fragile human life in a certain good way points back to the importance of fragility. If you take the position, dogmatically and a priori, that no fragility is worth defending, sometimes with a relatively necessary degree of coercion, because this fragile thing is not of ultimate importance (God can do something else) – even though there's a truth in that – it is indeed like iconoclasm. . . . If someone is going to destroy all the parish churches in Britain and the cathedrals, would there be no point at which you should defend them, even with arms? I would say you should, because there is something irreplaceable about the mediation of these little buildings. You can't just say if we lost these things, it will be all right. This is to despise time. I've got a much more radical valuation of temporality than some of the criticisms that have been thrown at me.

I do want you to ask yourselves, Why is pacifism so dominant in America? [Audience murmurs: "It's not, it's not."] No! No! Listen to me! You've got to listen! You're taking this too simplistically. Amongst American radicals, it's more dominant than among European radicals. There's something significantly American about it.

Katrina Poetker:
It seems to me that there's a conflation of pacifism and passivity. In my understanding of pacifism, another word might be "peacemaking," and that is almost the opposite of passivity. When I hear you talk about intervention of any kind, Mennonites are among those who have intervened in many, many situations of violence but have chosen to do so without choosing violence. That is what the Mennonite understanding of pacifism is.

[Unidentified Questioner]:
We were told that you ground your objection of pacifism in part [because] it's counter-intuitive with respect to both our fallen nature and our animal nature, self-defense, and those kinds of things. That came out in your response. But it seems like not a very good ground for justifying the rejection of a position, to say that it's counter-intuitive with respect to our fallen nature or animal nature. From a pacifist perspective, I think counter-intuitiveness is a mark of the truth of the position. If something is counter-intuitive with respect to our fallen nature, perhaps that's a sign we ought to have our intuitions reformed.

Milbank:
What I said was that [pacifism is] counter-intuitive in relation to our *created* nature, trying too much to jump out of our animality and the limited range of our responses like the instinctive protection of those close to us. We're not angels. We can't quite, we shouldn't try to, jump out of that kind of animality, because it belongs to our created nature.

Travis Kroeker:
Could you specifiy which of our intuitions are created and which ones are fallen?

Milbank:
A lot of theological debates are about that, aren't they? . . . .

Kroeker:
The notion that one would try to intervene in a situation where an innocent life is threatened is one kind of intuition; the question of how to do that is another. It seems to me that thought is required in making that transition.

Denny Weaver:
It was stated several times that you're really wanting to recover a pre-fourteenth century orthodoxy as the response to modernity and so on. You [can] look at history from both ends. You [can] look at it from the front, from where we are, and then go back to the point where you think it was right but since then it's a disagreement. So, some people have criticized Anabaptists for having this bad view of history [or for saying that] it was corrupt and then got recovered. In one sense, you're just moving the line back to where the fall was. That's what happens when you look at it front-back. What are the criteria for coming down there? If you come from the other end, starting with Jesus and the incarnation, then there is no standard. Every single doctrine, every single treatise, every single position, is a choice. What are your criteria for deciding that decisions from the thirteenth century bind us? Secondly, when, as Malinda Berry pointed out, people like James Cone and Delores Williams do not see themselves represented in that theology but handicapped by it, why is that foundation the basis to speak to our modern situation?

Milbank:
I don't like James Cone's theology at all, and I think the best Black theologian in America is Jay Carter at Duke. His book is coming out soon and contains, I think, a devastating critique of Cone's theology. A very different kind of black, more radical, and orthodox theology is now emerging. So, no, it's not the [thirteenth century] thing. It has to be a question of an authentic development of the gospel tradition that is the real test. I'm trying to say you can't separate reason, scripture, and tradition. That is [only] a way of looking at it that we have, partly as a result of the advent of printing. It's not just that, but we tend to think of the Bible as a single-bound book that is different from the movement of human beings in time. In the Middle Ages, the Bible was a much more oral reality, it didn't exist just in written form, literally. It's not that tradition was added to the text. If you read those catholics, you know that the Bible itself is tradition, it's a moving thing. Gregory the Great says, when he comments on the Bible, that it grows bigger. They just didn't have the Bible invented by protestants, in a certain sense. . . . Likewise, they didn't separate reason from grace [and] they had the idea that this Bible/tradition thing is fundamentally christocentric. . . . If you're an analytic philosopher, this will seem fantastically unsatisfactory, because there are no clear foundational starting points that we can point back to. . . . My sense is [we have lost] a kind of integral way of looking at things that is more authentic.

I and other people in Radical Orthodoxy are still fleshing out this 'what went wrong' account. It's not just Duns Scotus, it's a whole movement going back to Avicenna, in a way. Nor are we talking about – I say this in my new book and will say even more in my next book – simply reinstituting something. On the contrary, we need a much stronger sense of democracy, of consensus, of human-poetic-cultural formation of this process. This is the modern element, the renaissance element. I'm much more interested in a kind of counter-modernity represented by thinkers like Vico, Hamann, Cudworth, Jacobi, and Coleridge. . . . I'm much more interested in this counter-modernity – a non-aligned, orthodox, liberal, Kantian, epistemological-cum-politically liberal modernity – than in simply going back.

Note on Contributors

Jeremy M. Bergen is a doctoral student at Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, and is currently serving as interim director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

Peter C. Blum is associate professor of Sociology and Social Thought at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan.

Peter Dula is Iraq Program Coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee.

Ted Grimsrud is associate professor of Theology and Peace Studies at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, VA.

Matt Hamsher is a doctoral student in Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.

Scott Holland is associate professor of Peace Studies and Cross-Cultural Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary.