From Narrative Comes Theology

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Introduction

What "Mennonite systematic theology" is or should be has sparked lively debate. In the context of that debate and the multiple varieties offered, I agree with David Cramer's suggestion for such a theology: "Rather than beginning with foundational, universal first principles, Mennonite theologians will recognize the historical particularity of all forms of reasoning and will be unembarrassed by our inability to persuade others with different starting points than ours."[1] Thus I will neither engage in lengthy discussion about the definition of terms such as "Mennonite" or "systematic" or even "theology," nor defend my preferred designation of the project as "systematic theology for Mennonites" rather than Mennonite systematic theology. Instead I will jump into the fray from my particular perspective. I will posit my beginning point and explain my approach for using it. And from that explanation eventually there will appear answers to the questions of definition, methodology, sources, and audience.

A crucial question concerns the beginning point of a systematic theology for Mennonites. My assumption is that such a theology should begin with the New Testament narrative of Jesus. "Beginning point" in this assumption does not mean a fixed foundation. As will be clarified in what follows, this beginning point is itself subject to revision and new interpretation. Beginning point just means the first item that will be stated at the start of theologizing. I am assuming that Christian theology—and Mennonites are Christians—should begin with the story of Jesus Christ. Many implications follow from the claim that a systematic theology for Mennonites begins with the narrative of Jesus.[2]

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[1] David C. Cramer, "Mennonite Systematic Theology in Retrospect and Prospect," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 272.

[2] This essay is an attempt to be specific about the methodology that stands behind two publications, J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) and J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013). Interested readers can use the tables of contents and the indexes in these volumes to

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Beginning Point: Implications

(1) Beginning theology with the narrative of Jesus means that theology is a derived statement. It consists of insights and concepts that are extracted from or derived from, or that go beyond, what the narrative says. As a minimal NT example of this beginning point, note that in Acts the Apostles asserted their authority and identified Jesus by telling his story. These narrative statements occur in Acts 2:14-40; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-41. Common to all the accounts was that people in Jerusalem killed Jesus and that God raised him. Also occurring in most instances were statements of fulfilled scripture or a plan of God, which indicate that the event of Jesus was part of the ongoing story of God and God's people. Also present in most instances were statements of the witnesses to the events, and statements of how the hearers responded or the impact of the events.

This narrative outline appears in 1 Corinthians 15. This text provides one early example of developing theology from the narrative of Jesus. In verses 3b-8, Paul repeats the outline used in the Acts recitations. It is clearly a recitation of a previously known outline—he stresses that he is only passing on and referring to material passed to him. Paul repeated this handed-down narrative outline because he wanted to use it to make a point not included in the original outline from Acts. Based on the narrative, Paul argues that accepting that story of Jesus requires accepting the idea of a general resurrection of all the dead, and that to deny a general resurrection is to deny the resurrection of Jesus. For this argument to make sense, there must be an assumption of solidarity between Jesus and all humanity, so that what happens to one happens to all. My contention is that Paul brings the assumption of solidarity to the story that he was given, and then uses it to argue a point not included in the original story, belief in a general resurrection. This process of extracting and applying meaning from the narrative exemplifies how theology begins with the narrative of Jesus.

find more extensive discussions as well as sources used for the applications in this essay. A short version of the theology in interaction with some challengers is J. Denny Weaver, "A Jesus-Centered Peace Theology, or, Why and How Theology and Ethics are Two Sides of One Profession of Faith," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 5-27.

(2) When I asked a well-known womanist theologian whether there was any theology that could not be corrected, she replied, "God never wrote any theology." In other words, all theology, and that includes theology derived from the narrative of Jesus, is written by people. Such theology will be incomplete and imperfect because that is the nature of human beings. Other factors also contribute to the incomplete character of theology. Contexts evolve. Changing contexts provoke a looping back or a return to the narrative with new questions that require new thinking and application. Further, the narrative itself has no fixed form. It exists in four versions in the Gospels, as well as the outline in Acts, in 1 Corinthians 15, and elsewhere. These multiple forms make the narrative itself also subject to interpretation, along with the fact that the Gospel narratives themselves are already interpretations. Thus theology derived from the narrative is always incomplete or open-ended and subject to further discussion.

This open-ended character means that theology derived from the narrative of Jesus falls clearly within the postmodern conviction that there is no universally recognized and accessible norm of truth that coerces a hearer to believe against his or her will. There is no final form of theology to which all future theology must conform. There is, however, a postmodern way to testify to the truth of the theology one professes. To witness to the truth of claims about Jesus, a postmodern follower will live according to the story of Jesus, even when it is costly or dangerous.

(3) Although the narrative of Jesus exists in several versions, it is nonetheless widely acknowledged to make clear that Jesus rejected the sword as a means of advancing his mission or advancing the coming of God's reign. That Jesus rejected the sword can be generalized to say that he rejected violence. Stated positively, when we are talking about his rejection of the sword and his activist way of confronting injustice without mirroring evil, Jesus can be described as "nonviolent."[3] Deriving theology from the

[3] The term "nonviolence" is not used here as an abstract and transcendent idea that exists apart from the narrative of Jesus. Jesus rejected the sword. With the directions in the Sermon on the Mount to turn the other cheek, give cloak with coat, and go the second mile, he was showing ways to respond to violence or abuse without mirroring it. Furthermore, he engaged in activities, such as healing on the Sabbath and traveling through Samaria, that challenged existing purity regulations and demonstrated true justice. These actions are ways to confront

narrative of Jesus makes his rejection of violence an integral feature of theology derived from the story. That starting point also makes other social and ethical issues integral to theology. Jesus talked about the use and abuse of money, and expressed concern and caring for outcasts and the marginalized, including lepers and the poor. His treatment of Samaritans is akin to confronting racism today, while his treatment of women locates him with today's feminists. Thus, beginning theology with his story draws these and other social issues into the center of the theological enterprise.

Showing that these social issues, including the rejection of violence, are integral to the story of Jesus is not a reduction of theology to ethics or to nonviolence, as has sometimes been charged. It is rather a recognition that Jesus' work and mission cannot be discussed without reference to his actions. And when his actions are integral to who Jesus is, it points to the inseparable relationship of Christian theology and ethics. To identify Jesus is to tell his story, as the Apostles did in Acts, and to ask how a follower of Jesus should live requires telling his story. To say that theology begins with the narrative of Jesus thus shows that theology is the words that express the meaning of that story, while Christian ethics—the way Jesus' followers live—is a lived expression of that same narrative. Ethics and theology are inseparable.

(4) Theology derived from the narrative of Jesus relativizes or decenters the classic or standard Christological statements of Nicea, Chalcedon, and the Cappadocian Fathers' terminology for the Trinity, which emerged in the 4th and 5th centuries. The classic Christological language answers questions left open by the NT, but it does so with terminology different from the NT and assuming a philosophical system not fully present there, and situated in a worldview quite different from our own in the 21st century. These classic statements are efforts to derive theology from the NT's narrative of Jesus, and they are true within the framework and philosophical system they presume. However, with recognition of their particular context, it becomes apparent that in other contexts and epochs new ways to derive meaning from the narrative of Jesus in discussion of Christology are appropriate and

injustice without resorting to violence. With this picture of Jesus in view, "nonviolence" is a descriptive term that covers both the refusal to use the sword and resort to violence and the active ways to confront injustice without mirroring evil.

to be expected. These new formulations will reach back to the narrative of Jesus, while being in conversation with, but not necessarily beholden to, the classic time-honored images.

(5) To state the previous point differently: when theology is derived from the narrative, the classic language of Christology and Trinity is no longer posited as an unquestioned given. Rather, it is recognized as one kind of derivation of theology from the NT narrative. Removing these creedal statements from the category of unquestioned given, by pointing to their context, has profound implications for doing theology. Christology shifts from being an explanation of the 4th- and 5th-century statements as givens, and instead becomes a never finished process of deriving meaning from the narrative of Jesus. Put another way, the discussion of Christology begins with the NT narrative rather than as an explanation of classic statements accepted as givens from past centuries.

(6) A particular application of the shift of theology from explanation to derivation occurs with use of the language of Trinity. This language was developed as a way to affirm that God was in Jesus and also in the Holy Spirit, and to affirm their equality while maintaining their distinctness. Within the worldview and underlying philosophical assumptions of the time, this language offered good answers. However, there are other ways to affirm the equality of God and Jesus, or to confess that Jesus' story is God's story. Elsewhere I have asserted that God's resurrection of Jesus shows that Jesus' story was fully God's story. In Revelation 5, when the lamb with marks of slaughter is the only being in heaven or earth that can open the sealed scroll in God's hand and the heavenly host breaks into a loud song, culminating with "to the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever," these are resplendent affirmations of the equality of Jesus with God. That there are other ways to assert the relationship of God to Jesus means that the idea of three-ness or three-in-oneness in and of itself as a given is not an inherent characteristic of the God revealed in Jesus. I suggest that we should not claim that "Trinity" or three-ness is what is unique about the Christian view of God, and refrain from routinely referring to the God revealed in Jesus as the "Triune God."

(7) Rejection of violence shines a bright light on the silence about violence (and its accommodation) in the classic Christological imagery. As writers of several persuasions have shown, this silence accommodates the sword of the emperors and the willingness of ecclesiastical authorities to appeal for and accept imperial support when emperors sided with them. This social location constitutes an additional aspect of the particular context of the classic conciliar statements of Christology and Trinity. It is thus appropriate that theology derived from the narrative of Jesus supports alternatives. These alternatives will make visible his rejection of the sword, while being in conversation with, but not beholden to, the classic statements.

(8) Beginning theology with the narrative of Jesus changes markedly the understanding of, or approach to, atonement theology, and exposes the feudal context in which "satisfaction" atonement originated. One or another version of satisfaction atonement has been the predominant approach to the work of Christ for close to eight centuries. Anselm of Canterbury gave the first full articulation of satisfaction atonement imagery in his book *Cur Deus Homo*, published in 1098. Anselm wrote that he would prove the necessity of the God-man by "reason alone." Sin had disturbed the order of creation, he said, and for order to be restored God's honor had to be satisfied. Since humans had sinned, the one to offer the sacrifice to satisfy God had to be human. In order to cover the sins of all who would be saved, the effect of the sacrifice had to be infinite. As the God-man sent by God, Jesus satisfied those conditions.

To understand this image, one should know that Anselm assumed the Norman feudal system as a given. In the feudal order, when an underling offended the ruling lord, maintaining order in the realm depended on the lord's power either to punish the offender or to exact satisfaction. It should be more than obvious that Anselm pictured God as the ultimate feudal lord, and the "reason" to which he appealed was the assumptions of the feudal system. The 16th-century reformers introduced a modification of satisfaction, arguing that instead of satisfying God's honor, the death of Jesus satisfied God's law. This change did not alter the basic idea of satisfying God; it only shifted the divine target toward which Jesus' death was aimed.

The feudal system has long since disappeared, but the idea of Jesus'

death as a sacrifice to satisfy God or divine law remains widespread. A form of this atonement idea is also retained in the retribution-based criminal justice systems of many nations, with the state replacing God as the offended party.

Beginning with the narrative of Jesus to develop atonement imagery exposes a number of omissions and problems with the idea of satisfaction. The satisfaction images focus on Jesus' death, while the narrative culminates with resurrection. The narrative of Jesus displays no notion that God sent him for the purpose of dying to satisfy either God's offended honor or the death penalty demanded by divine law. The narrative makes clear that the violence which killed Jesus came from the side of human beings—the religious leadership who wanted Jesus removed and the Romans who did the actual killing. In contrast, for Jesus' death to be offered to God in satisfaction, God had to send him to die as that sacrifice, making God the agent behind his death, and the people who killed Jesus appear as both opposing God's reign and assisting God to receive the needed sacrifice. Not surprisingly, feminist and womanist writers have said that these atonement images picture God as a divine child abuser. Further, the role of Jesus poses an unhealthy, even dangerous, model for women in an abusive relationship and people in any situation of abuse or oppression—it is a model of passive submission to abuse by an authority figure.

Recently, some theologians have attempted to rescue a version of satisfaction atonement by claiming that Jesus' death was not about satisfying either the penalty of law or God's honor but about a more wholesome sounding concept, such as restoring true worship or obedience, or perhaps an exchange in which God takes Jesus' place to satisfy God's demand. Such rescue efforts may camouflage, but not alter, the underlying assumptions of any version of satisfaction atonement, namely that the death is still offered to God, God is the one who set Jesus up to make the satisfying sacrifice, and, for the death to be offered to God, the people who kill Jesus are both cooperating with God and opposing God's reign. The image of God as abusive and Jesus as a model of passive submission to abuse remains. In my estimation, beginning theology with the resurrection of Jesus calls for abandoning the received images of atonement and any version of satisfaction atonement, however it may be redefined.

(9) Perhaps the most striking theological implication of this discussion of atonement concerns the character of God. The critique of satisfaction atonement (and other inherited images as well) highlights the role of God in those images as that of a God who depends on and sanctions violence as the basis of salvation. In contrast, the God revealed in the narrative of Jesus is a God who responds to violence by restoring life. The God who responds to the killing of Jesus by restoring life is a nonviolent God. Since God is revealed in Jesus, as Christian faith professes, the God revealed in him should be conceptualized as nonviolent. The father in the parable of the Prodigal Son represents this image, a God who waits with loving arms for sinners to return. It is not the image of a God who first expects satisfaction or punishment before offering forgiveness.[4]

(10) Accepting that theology is derived from the narrative of Jesus and recognizing the particular context of classic, so-called orthodox theology changes one's perspective on "contextual" theologies. Theologies such as feminist or black or womanist should not be viewed as special pleading for a certain cause, in contrast to classic, so-called orthodox theology that is given the mantle of universality as though it applied to everyone. As already noted, the classic statements also reflect and emerge from a particular context. Stated rather crassly, it is just as legitimate for Jesus to be called *black* as to be called *homoousios*, although such designations should start with the fact that Jesus' ethnicity was Jewish.

(11) Recognizing that theology derived from the Jesus narrative both reflects and speaks to a context, and is always unfinished, does away with the idea of producing a theology-in-general, that is, a theology that speaks for all people in all times and places. Each theology expresses the meaning of the narrative of Jesus within a particular context. Theologies from different contexts can interact and stimulate and enrich each other. But there should

[4] Deriving theology from the narrative of Jesus focuses on the particular or material or earthly dimension of theology. However, to say that God is revealed in Jesus points toward a universal, metaphysical dimension to this particular theology as well. For development of the metaphysical dimension of this earthly-focused theology, see Justin Heinzekehr, "The Absent Christ and the Inundated Community: Constructing a Process-Anabaptist Micrometaphysics" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2015).

be no urgency to synthesize all theologies into one. A Palestinian liberation theology, for example, may have affinity with theology developed by First Nations peoples in North America, while both may have significantly different emphases from a systematic theology for North American Mennonites.[5] And Mennonite theology in the United States should find affinity with black theology. As outsiders to the mainstream (white) culture, black theology has developed as a challenge to the (presumed white) standard theology. Also, with a history of suffering and as outsiders in a different way to that same culture, Mennonite theologians ought to find significant opportunities for mutual enrichment with black theologians.[6]

(12) An illustration close to home for North American Mennonites illustrates the impact of differing contexts on theological expression. Canada and the United States have quite different social contexts. The US features a monolithic civil religion that deifies violence as the foundation for freedom, and a melting pot society in which varying ethnicities are to be downplayed and subsumed under the higher, more important category of "American." The term "melting pot" has fallen out of usage, but homogenization into the American whole is still alive. This Americanization can erode Mennonite identity. In contrast, Canada features a cultural mosaic without a monolithic civil religion. Within that mosaic, ethnic groups are accepted officially and maintain their identity with government support. Mennonites in Canada can thus be Canadian without weakening their identity as Mennonites.

The same theology may appear quite different when looked at from these two contexts. From my perspective in the United States, a theology for Mennonites must pose a comprehensive, multifaceted ecclesiological and

[5] Declaring that these several theologies stand alone is a correction to David Cramer's statement that my use of feminist, black, and womanist theologies was akin to Tom Finger's methodology. Finger does take pieces from various theologies and insert them into a mosaic, which he believes is one theology that suits all views. In contrast, I allow each theology to stand alone and to speak for its constituency even as I can learn from them, and hope they may also learn from my theological articulations. See Cramer, "Mennonite Systematic Theology," 267-69.

[6] For an important suggestion about such conversation, see Andrew G.I. Hart, "Salvaging the Way: A Critical, Comparative, and Constructive Black and Anabaptist Theological Ethic for Subverting Western Christendom and White Supremacy" (Ph.D. diss., Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, 2016).

nonviolent alternative to the monolithic civil religious society that claims the ultimate loyalty of all Americans. It is important that Mennonites have an identity distinct from American identity with its intrinsic violence, and that this identity pose a nonviolent witness to the surrounding, violence-prone society. But if this theology is transported into Canada and advocated for Mennonites without explanation, Canadians may hear it quite differently from my explanation on the American side of the border. Without a monolithic civil religion that must be opposed, Canadians may sense that American Mennonites are unnecessarily hostile to government; and the idea that a theology for Mennonites will pose an alternative to the social order may seem to imply that one member of the cultural mosaic is rising up to lord it over the others. In contrast, a theology for Mennonites that reflects the Canadian context might stress the need for them to engage cooperatively with other members of the mosaic. Because Canada has no monolithic violence-prone, civil religion, a theology for Mennonites in Canada lacks the requirement that they must have a particular identity over against Canadian society. Mennonites can be happily Canadian without feeling that their national identity conflicts with their pacifist orientation.

Such a theology may serve Canadian Mennonites well. But looked at from across the border, it can appear to be unaware of the dangers of nationalism, to lack a sense of clear Mennonite identity, and to be prone to assimilation into general Christianity and into Canadian society. In 1990-91, I spent a year in Winnipeg, where I learned something of the difference in the social milieu between Canada and the US and the challenge it poses to a theology for Mennonites that would transcend borders. Since then I have thought much about the way the same theology may be heard differently in the two countries, and I still cannot fathom completely one theology that can pass equally well on each side of the border without a significant amount of explanation. To me it is a lesson in recognizing the contextual nature of all theology, recognizing that theology is always in process, and being willing to abandon the notion that 4th- and 5th-century creedal formulas have settled for all times and places how we should talk about Jesus and about the God revealed in him.

(13) Deriving theology from the narrative of Jesus reminds us that this story is the continuation of a story that began in the Old Testament. Thus, by

extension, theology is also derived from the story of Israel. Statements about the God of that story should be compatible with or find their continuation in the God revealed in Jesus, who is a continuation of Israel's story. Two implications follow. Since the OT contains a narrative that unrolled over many centuries, it ought not surprise us that we discover different images of God and violence, and that the biblical authors differed in how they understood God and God's working with Israel. Thus we find both images of a God who exercises or sanctions great violence, and images of a God who acts without violence and sanctions nonviolent conflict management. Acknowledging the narrative source of these differences means accepting that OT writers differed in their understandings and that a modern reader is not obligated to harmonize all these images. Rather, reading with the nonviolence of Jesus in view points to the nonviolent images of God in the OT as the interpretation of God revealed in Jesus. At the same time, it is clear that the entire OT is necessary—picturing the violent images of God over against the nonviolent strands shows the significance of Jesus' continuation of the story. The same approach would apply to texts of slavery versus freedom, or polygamy versus "husband of one wife."

(14) I have not yet said anything specific on the question of systematic theology for Mennonites. As a first point on that agenda, I will state the obvious, namely that Mennonites are Christians. Thus theology that begins by developing meaning from the narrative of Jesus is Christian theology. That makes theology developed from this narrative theology for Mennonites. Theology that starts with this narrative could also be called an Anabaptist theology. My interpretation of Anabaptism is that it is one particular manifestation of a movement whose impulse is to point back to Jesus as the basis of truth.[7] The 16th-century Anabaptist movement is by no means the only such movement or impulse in church history, but it is the one from which Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren find their historical origins. Thus theology identified by the name of that historical movement is an appropriate name for theology for Mennonites and Brethren.

[7] For this interpretation of Anabaptism, see Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House; co-published with Herald Press, 2009).

In point (3) above, I said that starting with the narrative made nonviolence, as well as other issues of social ethics, integral to theology. Mennonites (along with Brethren and Quakers) are identified as "historic peace churches." Given the prevalence of and proclivity to violence in the American national ethos, a theology featuring nonviolence is of great importance to Mennonites in the United States. The ongoing presence of racism in American society underscores the need for that theological challenge. The same is true for issues related to equality of women, and for issues contributing to poverty and increasing the wealth gap between rich and poor. For these reasons, I would hope that the historic peace churches would welcome as their own theology that has rejection of violence and other issues of social justice as intrinsic characteristics. At the same time, since this theology begins with the narrative of Jesus Christ, it is theology that engages every Christian.

(15) My previous point placed theology for Mennonites in the context of the United States. An earlier point described differences in ethos between the US and Canada. These differences call for conversation when theology crosses the border.

But there are other contexts as well. In 2009 I spent a month in the Congo (Kinshasa), giving lectures on nonviolent atonement theology. In these presentations I emphasized that Jesus made God's reign visible by confronting injustices. The response was not what I had anticipated. In one setting, students wanted to know what I thought Jesus' confrontation of injustice had to say to their situation. Feeling a bit of embarrassment, I said I didn't know their political context well enough to comment, and they would have to figure that out for themselves. Professing not to know turned out to be the right answer for that context, as I learned from the dean of the religion faculty, who seconded my answer with an enthusiastic "amen." The Congo is still recovering from decades of colonial rule in which few Congolese were allowed to go to school after sixth grade, and all answers and all administrative work came from the foreign colonial rulers. Thus without any wise intention on my part, telling the Congolese that they could find their own answers to their problems was the right response.

There was a church dimension as well. I was told that some

missionaries had said "blessed are the poor," which made poverty sound like a blessing and undercut incentives to combat it. And some missionaries also attempted to do everything—teach, supply money, hand out clothing, lead congregations. Thus the people learned to wait passively for gifts and expected God to provide them. Again, in an unanticipated way, the message about an activist Jesus who confronted problems was welcomed by church leaders, who told me they were now teaching their people to be active in working for God's blessing.[8] The description of the context of Congo could be expanded greatly beyond what I could learn in three-and-a-half weeks. But this brief description is enough to show that a theology that speaks to Mennonites in the Congo will sound different from theology for Mennonites in Canada or the United States.

(16) I have referred to three distinct contexts for systematic theology for Mennonites—Canada, the United States, the Congo. Each calls for a theology with different nuances and emphases. The same theology cannot be transplanted from one context to the other without any changes or explanation. The number of contexts could be expanded greatly.[9] Further, we must recognize that the American milieu has produced more than one theology that challenges the dominant culture. To name only two, one is the Anabaptist/peace church theology that I advocate, and another is black theology. Although Anabaptists and the black church have obviously different histories, each has a history of suffering that gives them an outsider stance vis-à-vis the dominant culture. Even though theology should derive from the narrative of Jesus, how it is derived and the emphases it has, and how it addresses the particular context will vary greatly. For this reason I speak of "systematic theology for Mennonites," which allows for many versions, rather than of Mennonite systematic theology, which can perhaps imply a search for one such theology. Theology will vary from one context to another and there can be multiple systematic theologies for Mennonites.

[8] For a longer discussion of this experience in the Congo, see J. Denny Weaver, "Atonement in the Congo," *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 17 (2009): 175-82.

[9] For examples of theology using indigenous African imagery, see Anton Wessels, *Images of Jesus: How Jesus is Perceived and Portrayed in Non-European Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

Each of these must truly represent its context of origin, even as they may find many significant points in common.[10] Thus my language is systematic theology for Mennonites.

(17) This essay has argued that theology for Mennonites is or should be derived from the narrative of Jesus. I am not saying this is a quasi-magical methodology that solves all questions. On the contrary. Quite obviously, bad theology can be derived from the narrative, and bad applications. Deriving theology and ethics from the narrative of Jesus does not guarantee truthfulness or suitability. I suggest that the way to truthfulness has at least two aspects. One is the recognition that as a human product, theology is always incomplete or in process and therefore always subject to correction and revision. The second is to recognize that theology needs daylight. Theology is written for the church, and thus there should always be open, widespread discussion about the meaning of the narrative, and the theology and ethics derived from it.

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[10] A suggestion for such harmony with distinction is Hart, "Salvaging the Way."