Relationships and Emotions after Christendom

Practical Help for Constructive Relationships

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Introduction

From time to time an angel sends me a text asking if we can meet. He was a student of mine some years back, and we have kept in touch. We have talked about his work with people, his personal relationships and his spiritual life; I share some things in my own life as well. These conversations are a delight because this angel is passionately committed to teenagers and has such an enthusiasm for life. I have sometimes been concerned for him as he negotiates life's serious challenges. Yet it is moving to see and hear how God's Spirit is at work in him; he is a messenger from God to me.

Relationships are essential to all our lives: without them we would not be human. God comes to us in various ways, but most profoundly God comes to us through people; sometimes we are intensely aware of this. It is important to latch onto this insight and then to turn it upon those relationships that may be more challenging or more mundane, and to ask ourselves, 'What is God doing and saying through this person?'

Most people long to be involved in meaningful relationships, to have family members they can talk to, friends they can rely on, lovers with whom to share their lives. Westernized societies are awash with mind-boggling means of electronic communication, and yet loneliness appears to be a rising phenomenon. And, of course, there are followers of Jesus[1] who cry out for God to help them with their relationships.

Emotions are essential to these relationships. Yet some people find their own emotions hard to recognize, difficult to express or impossible to handle; they may be overtaken powerfully by sadness, hate or private obsessions. Others are intimidated by the strong expression of emotions by those with whom they live or work. Could we learn to

live with our emotions, and those of others, in a more mature way; could we develop emotional literacy?

In this book I am concerned to seek God's wisdom concerning the small-scale interactions of our lives and the somewhat larger-scale interactions of our churches and local communities. My focus is not on romantic, sexual relationships, but on the less intimate, though still significant social relationships involved in day-to-day living. We need to think carefully about sex and marriage after Christendom, but I cannot squeeze the necessary material pertaining directly to that subject area into this book. Nevertheless, all of the following chapters are relevant to the conduct of romantic, sexual relationships, as much as to any others.

What insights might we draw on to nurture our emotional life and to guide our conduct of social relationships? I will be working with fields as diverse as biblical studies and neuroscience to answer this question. Academic study is frequently carried out in very narrow fields of expertise, yet there is a growing recognition of the need to work in an interdisciplinary way. The New Testament scholar Kavin Rowe wrote not long ago:

> The days are gone when we may confidently inhabit one mode of thought to the exclusion of others . . . all thinking is done by people whose lives are not lived in discrete moments of intellectual disciplines but in the unity of one, narratively structured life. That we can somehow extract our thinking from our lives and think solely in terms of a field of study is an illusion; it is in fact the modern university's social reproduction of a mind/body dualism.[2]

I do not want to lose sight of the large-scale interactions of societies and international relations; indeed, I believe that they are connected with the smaller-scale workings of families and local communities. Western culture encourages us to compartmentalize various aspects of existence, and so there is a tendency to shut off the way we behave in our 'private' lives from our more 'public' relationships with neighbours or in the workplace; we are inclined to deal with people

we know in rather different ways from those we use with strangers. It is commonly argued that the way politicians behave in their private lives makes no difference to their capacities for public responsibilities. Yet I am convinced that attitudes and habits practised in one sphere frequently colour decisions and behaviour in another. In postmodern culture the interconnectedness of everything is increasingly recognized; communications, economics, ecology, and so on.

I am also concerned with integrity; that our behaviour should be congruent with our profession as disciples of Jesus. Perhaps we should not be surprised by inconsistency in international politics. In the last fifty years or more, leaders of Western nations have used the rhetoric of freedom and democracy, yet have pursued foreign policies of perceived national self-interest that have entailed supporting oppressive regimes, a contradiction that was embarrassingly exposed by the uprisings in several Arab nations during 2011–12. Even so, it is not unusual to find that Christian churches and organizations set up to address injustice and inequality in society are exploiting their own staff – unintentionally, and out of other admirable motives, yet unjustly all the same. I find it much easier to speak about God than to care for my neighbour, but that is a form of taking God's name in vain.

Although I grew up in a Christian home, and cannot remember a time when the God I knew in Jesus was not integral to my life, it wasn't until I had left ordained Anglican ministry and was engaged in a doctorate in systematic theology that I realized the central importance of Jesus' teaching to 'love your enemies'. I have come to find my spiritual home within the Anabaptist movement, which has its historical origins in the radical reformers of the sixteenth century.[3] One core conviction of contemporary Anabaptists is that peace is at the heart of the gospel: 'As followers of Jesus in a divided and violent world, we are committed to finding non-violent alternatives and to learning how to make peace between individuals, within and among churches, in society and between nations.'[4]

But how do we repent of our hypocrisy and move towards integrity? By all means, let us pray for God's Spirit to lead us on the path

to sanctification and maturity. Yet we should also take our part of the responsibility to grow – through re-examination of our beliefs about God, consideration of collected wisdom about people and communities, and through reflection on our own lives. In this book I discuss some key aspects of social relationships and emotional literacy in order to stimulate that growth among people who have a similar desire to see change in their own lives, churches and communities.

I taught several elements of this book over ten years in my capacity as a tutor on the Oasis Youth Work and Ministry Course, and latterly as Principal Lecturer in Theology at Oasis College of Higher Education, London. Students in their final year of professional training found it challenging to engage their developing theological understanding with some psychological theory. I have tried to enable them to reflect upon their own emotions as well as their own practice of relationships with young people, children and families. I do something similar in this book, interweaving theological and psychological discussion with suggestions for personal reflection and practical outworking.

Adventures with Psychology and Theology

Following previous careers in engineering research and Christian ministry, in the early 1990s I trained as a relationship counsellor with the nationwide charity Relate, and volunteered several hours a week until 2006, working with couples and sometimes with people on their own. This organization drew upon a number of established psychological theories in order to gain insight into clients' relationships and emotions; it used an eclectic rather than dogmatic theoretical approach.[5]

A core practice of counselling is supervision by a skilled and experienced colleague, and sometimes I found this helped me to explore my own thoughts and feelings about my work with clients, recognize transference[6] and understand what was 'going on in the counselling room' (the subtle relational dynamics between those involved).

Even more helpful was group supervision in which several counsellors would discuss and reflect on the conduct and outcomes of cases, sometimes over a period of several months. My colleagues, mostly women, would often help with extraordinary insights, while valuing my male perspective.

Sometimes I went into a counselling session not really knowing what I was going to do or how I could help clients. But I learned to 'trust the process', and that *who I was* mattered as much as my grasp of theory or technical skill. Sometimes I have been asked about the effectiveness of such counselling, and I reply that I suspect over half of the couples I worked with went away with a stronger relationship, but that many of the others had delayed seeking help through counselling until it was too late to make a difference. A number of those who separated from each other found the counselling helped to make the process less damaging, and some continued in individual counselling in order to learn what they could from their experiences.[7] Did I enjoy this counselling? Enjoyment is not the most appropriate category in my estimation; my conviction is that counselling can make a worthwhile contribution to some people's lives and thereby, in a modest fashion, to wider society.

After some years in practice I became a tutor for a Christian counselling training course and then on a university counselling training programme. I thought critically about the relationship between the psychological theories that I used and their relationship to my Christian convictions. While some Christians practised a naïve form of 'counselling' that eschewed 'secular' psychological insights and embraced a fairly fundamentalist approach to the Bible,[8] other Christians were counselling using these 'secular' psychological insights but without significant theological understanding or critique. I found neither of these positions satisfactory, but struggled to identify a better alternative (this was in the days before the internet). Eventually I discovered Robert Roberts' *Taking the Word to Heart*, which critically examined several influential psychologies in the light of a Christian view of the self.[9] Roberts writes from within a Reformed theological perspective, and argues, I think rightly, for a distinctively Christian

psychology.[10] Later I came across Daniel Schipani, who provided an Anabaptist framework for counselling.[11] A fresh conversation between Christian theology and various psychological disciplines has recently begun with the publication of *Christianity and Psychoanalysis*.[12]

Some critics have argued that the rise of a 'therapeutic culture' during the twentieth century had a deleterious effect on society, and it has been identified as a direct competitor with the Christian faith. There is no doubt that Freud's psychological explanation of religion continued to undermine the traditional authority of Christianity in the West, and his legacy of psychoanalysis became trendy in the USA in the post-Second World War period. In *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, Philip Rieff traced the thought of three of Freud's students and intellectual heirs, Carl Jung, Wilhelm Reich and D.H. Lawrence, who were key heretical psychoanalytic thinkers of the twentieth century and putative agents in the crisis of authority in the West.[13]

While various 'talking' and 'alternative' therapies took the place of traditional pastoral care of many churches in North America, British people were, until fairly recently, quite suspicious of counselling and reflection upon feelings, preferring to receive treatment for emotional disorders in the form of drugs, or to self-medicate using alcohol. In the last decades of the twentieth century this began to change as various forms of counselling became widespread and then cognitive-behavioural therapy was proved effective in helping with some forms of anxiety and depression. Commentators on the London 2012 Olympic Games noticed how many British athletes and spectators expressed their emotions quite openly. Yet many Christian people are still reluctant to admit to emotional or relationship difficulties, assuming that their faith should provide them with immediate solutions to such struggles.

It seems to me that several responses are required. First, the totalitarian claims of psychology to explain away religion on the grounds that it is an illusion – a human construct rather than a revelation of the divine – have failed; psychology is itself a human construct and cannot provide a total explanation for human being. Nancey Murphy

has argued that psychology needs theology and ethics to help it address the question of what constitutes the good life.[14] The psychological explanation of religion is a part of the wider modern project that questions traditional authority. In postmodernity this explanation is much less assured than it once was, and after Christendom following Jesus fits less easily than it once did into the standard categories of 'religion'.

Second, once those totalitarian claims are dismissed, it must be recognized that psychology has a significant part to play in understanding human beings. The study of the human mind, in relation to such features as perception, development, personality and behaviour, is of as much value as any other field of exploration. Social psychology has made a real contribution to understanding social influence and social relations,[15] although the dominant area of investigation has been into intimate and sexual relationships rather than those of family or friendship.[16] Particular psychological therapies contain assumptions about human nature that should be subjected to theological critique, yet recognition should also be given to the valuable insights into human beings and worthwhile practices that they may contain, bringing a measure of healing and constructive change to many people.[17]

Third, where people might once have gone to a Christian minister for pastoral care, in the therapeutic culture the client goes to individual (or couple) sessions with a psychotherapist or counsellor, a trained 'specialist' who manages a process that mediates 'salvation' of a kind.[18] Many clergy have responded by training in psychotherapy or counselling, but have effectively swapped professions in the process and failed to integrate their new skills into Christian pastoral care. Larry Crabb, an experienced psychotherapist and respected leader in the field of Christian counselling, shocked many of his colleagues in the mid-1990s when he openly questioned the value of much Christian psychotherapy and suggested that the Christian counselling industry should be dismantled:

> We must do something other than train professional experts to fix damaged psyches. Damaged psyches aren't the problem. The problem beneath

our struggles is a disconnected soul. And we must do more than exhort people to do what's right and then hold them accountable. Groups tend to emphasize accountability when they don't know how to relate. Better behaviour through exhortation isn't the solution, though it sometimes is part of it. Rather than fixing psyches or scolding sinners, we must provide nourishment for the disconnected soul that only a community of people can offer.[19]

My initial response to this was to agree with Crabb's perception that therapy and counselling are not getting to the root of people's problems, and that some psychological problems are due to isolation from genuine community. But on reflection it seems to me that Crabb unnecessarily polarizes two approaches to health; his statement is unhelpfully dismissive of talking therapies. These can have a vital role to play, though they require supplementing with a more holistic approach to communities and social relationships.

Of course, the real problem is that the 'communities' in which individuals find themselves,[20] and particularly churches, are so often socially disordered or lacking in genuine interpersonal interaction. In my experience, few churches are emotionally healthy communities, and very few church leaders understand that nurturing the life of their churches as communities is central to their calling. The prevailing notion of accountability in most churches is a formal or legal one. However, I am relieved to find that some church leaders are beginning to realize the significance of the emotional health of churches.[21]

After-Christendom Christians in therapeutic or counselling practice should pay much more attention to the communal context of what they are doing, and in particular to the communal life of the church.[22] Sometimes the counsellor or pastoral carer is aware that a person's difficulties cannot be adequately addressed at a personal level since they are generated by malfunctions in the local 'community' or wider society. There is a need for conversation between therapists or counsellors and church leaders about how to nurture communities, how to foster friendships, how to encourage mutual accountability, how to work through conflicts.

In recent years I have come across Dr Peter Holmes and Dr Susan Williams, who tell an intriguing story about the development of a healing ministry and of a church as a community in which people support and challenge each other as they find solutions to otherwise intractable personal problems.[23] As a remarkable result, Christ Church, Deal, is a member of the Association of Therapeutic Communities (a secular organization). We all have weaknesses and struggle with various issues; it is in the community of the church that we might hope to find the resources for change and growth – except that most churches hardly see themselves fulfilling such a calling.

Relationships and Emotions after Christendom

At first glance it may seem that the consideration of social relationships and emotional literacy that I propose has little to do with the demise of Christendom, the era 'when church and state jointly presided over a society in which almost all were assumed to be Christian'. Anabaptists are persuaded that 'whatever its positive contributions on values and institutions, Christendom seriously distorted the gospel, marginalized Jesus and has left the churches ill-equipped for mission in a post-Christendom culture'.[24] Yet as I have worked in this field over the years, it has become clear that a post-Christendom analysis illuminates the subject in three important ways, apart from what has been said already about the therapeutic culture.

The formation of Christendom began with the toleration of Christianity under Constantine in AD 313 and its subsequent promotion. It was set in place by Theodosius' establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire towards the end of the fourth century. Its implications were worked out by various theologians during the fourth and fifth centuries,[25] Augustine of Hippo proving especially influential in western Christendom. Just one significant doctrine that became entrenched at that time was that of divine impassibility; this has come to be understood as asserting that God does not suffer the effects of time or creaturely

causation, and thus does not experience pain or emotions. At the same time as Christendom has been disintegrating, the doctrine of divine impassibility has come under increasing question. It is such an important topic for this book that I will discuss it in Chapter 1, and ask whether the early Christian writings from before Christendom contribute insights into emotions and social relationships that illuminate contemporary life. A core conviction of Anabaptists is that Jesus is the focal point of God's revelation, and I will argue that Jesus reveals God's emotions as much as any other aspect of the divine being.

Second, the establishment of Christendom saw a marked shift in the nature of church, towards a highly structured and monolithic institution. Reading the New Testament, one gains the impression that the early churches were strongly relational communities; the language of family and household is pervasive throughout the epistles.[26] As the years went by it was perhaps inevitable that a degree of institutionalism should dilute that early vitality, especially as the division between clergy and laity took hold during the second century.[27] But during the fourth century many aspects of church life changed considerably once church attendance became conventional and ecclesiastical legal processes developed.[28] The notion of catholicity meant that all churches were expected to adhere to exactly the same beliefs, on pain of excommunication and exile.[29] Of course, strongly relational forms of Christian community continued within Christendom, especially within the monastic movements, but most conventional churches became centred on the liturgical services conducted by the clergy, which were corporate but only relational in limited ways. Various renewal movements sought to recapture aspects of the vitality of the earliest church (the Waldensians, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, the Methodists . . .), and often flourished for a time because of their intense relational dimensions.

One aspect of postmodernity is the quest for relationships and new forms of community, often difficult to square with being immersed in a consumerist and individualist culture. Many Christians continue to be content with what I call 'performance and audience'

forms of corporate worship; at the Reformation, the priest moved from the altar to the pulpit, but the congregation remained largely passive observers, despite the watchword of 'the priesthood of all believers'. Today even innovative churches continue to take the form of largely passive observers led by 'worship leaders', whether with choirs or bands. However, others are looking for more participatory, 'multi-voiced' alternatives.[30] As Christendom fades, new forms of church are arising, but they often get into difficulties, and it is worth considering one reason why.

Another aspect of postmodernity is rapid change. Many churches and some Christian organizations find change difficult. If churches are to engage in mission, they must stay in touch with those outside their regular contacts. This involves churches and organizations in becoming skilled at learning and adaptation. But change is often painful (though it can also be exciting) and attempts at change frequently generate conflict. In order to negotiate change in a productive rather than destructive way, churches must acquire the necessary emotional literacy and the skills of handling change in a mature fashion.

The disintegration of Christendom has coincided with the decline of old authoritarian assumptions and practices of church life across the denominations. In many ways this is a good thing, since the undermining of the old divisions between clergy and laity is essential if the church is to recover its identity as the people of God.[31] However, the new-found freedoms are open to abuse. There are many cases of bad behaviour in churches: some church leaders exploit or manipulate people for whom they are responsible (as happened frequently during Christendom), but it is now easier for church members to exhibit other forms of abusive activity. I know of situations in which church members have subjected leaders to unfair expectations, false accusations and even hate campaigns. Indeed, significant numbers of church leaders have left positions of responsibility because they have experienced too many bruising conflicts. It is becoming obvious that developing relational skills as well as emotional health must be a priority in churches.

Third, the establishment of Christendom significantly eroded the key ethical commitments to peace and justice that were embodied in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It is well known that the concept of the just war, which originated with Cicero, the Roman Stoic, was embedded into the Christian tradition by Augustine of Hippo under the influence of Bishop Ambrose of Milan. It is less well known that, even according to Augustine, Christians who participated in a 'justified' war had to go through a period of repentance that included being barred from participating in the Eucharist for a considerable time span. The holy Christian knight was not glorified until the eleventh century, perhaps under the influence of the warlike spirit of the Germanic tribes. It was only with the Reformation that soldiering was accepted as an inherently unproblematic profession – it seems that the just war tradition was decisively weakened with the loss of unity in the Western church.[32]

The unravelling of Christendom in the twentieth century coincided with increased questioning of war, despite its continued pursuit by nations that had understood themselves as part of Christendom. The follies of Vietnam and, more recently, Iraq have demonstrated the jingoistic character of many politicians' rhetoric, yet the culture of vengeance and militarism is as powerful as ever. The international banking crisis that began in 2008 and the ongoing crises of confidence in the Eurozone have not yet led to a significant modification of market economics. The economic doldrums indicate that Western societies may face some years of austerity, with the potential for increasing selfishness and generosity-fatigue.

After Christendom, Christian ethics is up for grabs in an unprecedented way. There is an opportunity for disciples of Jesus to live out a style of social relationships that is emotionally healthy, that handles conflict constructively, that challenges injustice creatively, and that forgives graciously. If we could demonstrate these practices at a local level, we might have some gifts to offer the wider world. But we need the vision and the skills to do so, and I hope that this book might contribute to both.

Overview of Selected Topics

The first part of the book consists of three chapters that discuss the interlinked topics of emotions and emotional literacy, social relationships, and the relational self. The approach in each of these linked fields is to attend first to what we can learn about Jesus from the gospels, then to consider some of the theoretical issues raised by them – philosophical, psychological and theological – before offering some suggestions for reflection and application.

Here I will make some general remarks as to my approach to hermeneutics: how we move from our contemporary world to the ancient text and return to discover God's word for our own lives. An Anabaptist approach to discipleship acknowledges Jesus as the source of our life, the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle. This is all very well, but there is no neutral place from which to come at Jesus, no scratch from which to start. Even if we begin with the four gospels, they provide us with four particular perspectives upon Jesus. We cannot hope to understand the gospels' witness to Jesus without frequent reference to the Scriptures of Israel, while the other books that make up the remainder of the New Testament are essential reference points because they provide a window onto the earliest followers of Jesus. We all read the Bible through our own particular set of 'lenses', made up of our personal and family experiences, church traditions, reading materials and cultural filters. Scholars may help us to understand the historical, political and cultural contexts of the ancient world, together with the literary techniques that were employed in writings produced long ago, so that we come closer to grasping their significance. Even so, the way in which we piece together the various ingredients will be influenced by a number of philosophical and theological assumptions that we have picked up from sermons, conversations, books, songs, films, the internet and so on. Thus, an Anabaptist approach to discipleship will need to be aware of a number of methodological considerations even as it seeks to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and concentrate attention on him.

In any one book it is impossible to discuss meaningfully the full spectrum of human emotions and social relationships, and so in the second part of the book I have selected certain topics that are crucial when relationships become difficult, and about which there seem to be widespread misunderstandings. In Chapter 4 I begin with the topics of loss and bereavement since psychological perspectives concerning these basic human experiences provide insight into the complexities of relationships and the profound emotions they can invoke. Of these, anger has received a very negative evaluation in the Christian tradition, but its rehabilitation is on the way, and in Chapter 5 I will argue that this emotion has a significant part to play in our lives. I will also discuss fear since there are important links between it and anger, and fear plays a major part in conflict and oppressive behaviour.

When I trained for Christian ministry in the early 1980s very little was said about church conflict, and during my first curacy the church plunged into a deep convulsion. Training for handling conflict is, thankfully, becoming more common in church leadership courses.[33] Chapter 6 provides a perspective on conflict that has helped me take a more positive approach to something I would otherwise be inclined to avoid. Chapter 7 then explores Christlike ways of response when subject to injustice or oppression. Divine forgiveness is a topic at the heart of the Christian faith, yet many misunderstandings surround the human practice of forgiveness; thus Chapter 8 explores what is involved in this vital Christian practice. In Chapters 6 to 8 the topics are grounded in studies of Jesus' behaviour as well as his teaching.

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My mother died not long before this book went to publication. It would not have come to pass without her, in particular because she was a 'people person', open-hearted, and in touch with her emotions.

My wife, Kathy, has been key to my learning about relationships and emotions over thirty years. Having recently retired from a career in teaching hearing-impaired primary children, she is currently engaged in training as an arts psychotherapist, and so our conversations about this field have been an important stimulus. Several long-standing friends have read early versions of parts of this book and provided valuable critical feedback. I thank my friends Jean Watson, Lance Pierson and Andrew Francis.

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This book is a work in progress; it has been difficult to stop writing! I am conscious that there is so much more to be said on most of the subjects treated here, and would refer readers to the resources to be found in the endnotes. Having written about highly personal and quite sensitive topics, I must acknowledge that I am a learner in the broad field of relationships and emotions. Though I have been trained in both counselling and theology, I do not claim to be an expert, and I am certainly not without fault in my own conduct of relationships or management of emotions. No doubt my readers will identify weaknesses in some of my assertions and analyses, so I welcome responses to this book at jeremy.thomson@oasiscollege.ac.uk.

Endnotes

Introduction

[1] I prefer this expression to 'Christians' because the common perception of Christianity and Christians is so mired in associations with the Crusades, the Inquisition, TV evangelists, prosperity gospel preachers, etc., that its original meaning (Acts 11:26) has been obscured.

[2] Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p. 8.

[3] The Anabaptist movement has taken root in Britain and Ireland since the establishment of the London Mennonite Centre in the 1950s, and as a result of the efforts of a number of North American Mennonite teachers, and those indigenous leaders that they have influenced.

[4] Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), p. 161.

[5] The theories drawn upon included attachment, object relations, transactional analysis, and family systems, with some behavioural elements. See Chris Butler and Victoria Joyce, *Counselling Couples in Relationships: An Introduction to the RELATE Approach* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1998).

[6] Transference is the unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another. In a counselling context, the client may feel about, and behave towards, the counsellor as if she/he was the client's mother/father (or significant other). It is important for the counsellor to realize when this is happening, and to recognize any counter-transference (the

counsellor behaves in accord with the transference; e.g. as would the client's mother), and use such insights to help the client.

7 Mine is a very subjective assessment, of course. On the Relate website, http://www.relate.org.uk (accessed January 2012), it is reported that '80% of respondents said that Relate counselling had strengthened their couple relationship'.

8 The classic early example was Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970).

9 Robert Roberts, *Taking the Word to Heart: Self and Other in an Age of Therapies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993).

10 See his essays 'Introduction: Christian Psychology?' and 'Parameters of a Christian Psychology' in *Limning the Psyche: Explorations in Christian Psychology* (ed. Robert C. Roberts and Mark R. Talbot; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 1–19 and 74–101.

11 Daniel S. Schipani, *The Way of Wisdom in Pastoral Counselling* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2003).

12 Earl A. Bland and Brad D. Strawn, eds, *Christianity and Psychoanalysis: A New Conversation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

13 Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

14 See Murphy's exposition and others' discussion in *Why Psychology Needs Theology: A Radical Reformation Perspective* (ed. Alvin Dueck and Cameron Lee; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

15 E.g. David G. Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).

16 Acknowledged by Diana Dwyer, *Interpersonal Relationships* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 112.

17 Roberts evaluates the therapeutic approaches of Rogers, Ellis, Nagy, Jung and Kohut in part one of *Taking the Word to Heart*.

18 Notice how this resort reflects the Christendom adaptation of Christian leadership to the priestly model common to many religions.

19 Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships – A Radical New Vision* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1997), p. xvi.

20 I recognize that the term 'community' can mean many different things; what I mean by community will soon become evident.

21 See the important work of Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

22 Philip Rieff shows that ancient social theorists agreed that an individual could only be fully human when participating in the common life, and

thus that 'Ultimately, it is the community that cures'. Modern social theorists argued that people must free themselves from binding attachments to communal purposes in order to express their individualities. Going further, Freud took the view that there was in his day no positive community within which the individual could merge himself therapeutically. See Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutic*, pp. 66–71.

23 For an accessible discussion, see Peter R. Holmes, *Trinity in Human Community: Exploring Congregational Life in the Image of the Social Trinity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006). For the theoretical framework see Peter R. Holmes, *Becoming More Human: Exploring the Interface of Spirituality, Discipleship and Therapeutic Faith Community* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005). Susan Williams tells her own story of healing in *Letting God Heal: From Emotional Illness to Wholeness* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004).

24 Murray, *Naked Anabaptist*, p. 158.

25 This is not to say that they realized the full extent of what they were doing. Though they were aware of their broad historical context, it is arguable whether they grasped the significance of the shift from being persecuted to becoming agents of persecution.

26 The key books here are Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (London: SPCK, 1985), and Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2nd edn, 1994).

27 See Alexandre Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

28 Augustine's concept of the invisibility of the true church meant that one couldn't be quite sure who was a genuine sister / brother or not.

29 The numerous church councils witness to this, though it was impossible to prevent significant variations in practice, especially between the Latin West and Greek East.

30 As advocated by Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider, *Worship and Mission after Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), and Stuart and Sian Murray Williams, *Multi-Voiced Church* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012).

31 See Stuart Murray, *Church after Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), pp. 170–72.

32 See the Lutheran theologian Reinhard Hütter, 'Be Honest in Just War Thinking!' in *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honour of John Howard Yoder* (ed. Stanley Hauerwas et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 80, n. 21.

33 The London Mennonite Centre made a significant contribution to the life of many churches through the creation of what is now an independent

charity specializing in training and consultancy in church conflict, Bridge Builders Ministries.