

Echoes of Ancient Wisdom: Old Order Mennonite Spirituality in Monastic Perspective

Andrew C. Martin, *University of Toronto*

Since their beginning, Old Order Mennonites¹ have frequently been judged by their more acculturated cousins to be lacking in spirituality. This is particularly true of those Mennonite periods and movements most strongly influenced by revivalism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century North America, the 'Old' or 'Swiss' Mennonite communities were inundated with a new faith experience and spiritual language. With this new spirituality it became exceedingly easy to view the Old Orders, as well as the preceding centuries, as spiritually lax.² Mennonites who continue to be influenced by fundamentalism and evangelicalism are apt to view Old Orders as legalistic and lacking in spirituality based on their lack of revivalism language and experience; even their salvation may be in question.

Anabaptist-Mennonites have historically favoured a pragmatic, simple-yet profound, biblical following after Christ that in many ways the Old Orders have retained. The outward focus has given the impression, especially for those shaped by the influential Anabaptist Vision first articulated by Harold S. Bender in 1943, that spirituality was contradictory to the tradition. For example, Robert Friedmann's 1949

landmark study, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*, dichotomized the outer and the inner life,³ characterizing Anabaptism as a radical obedience and witness, and Pietism as a subjective inner experience. Thus the inner life of Anabaptism was marginalized or even disparaged in this view. In both the “evangelical” and the “Vision” perspective, the Old Orders fall short of the ideal because to the former they are too quiet about their spirituality, and in the latter they are too withdrawn and segregated in their outer life.

The Old Order movement in North America began in the late nineteenth century as conservative minded groups withdrew from the Mennonite Church. This happened in Indiana and Ohio (1872), Ontario (1889), Pennsylvania (1893), and Virginia (1900).⁴ In Ontario, Bishop Abraham Martin led a group out of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario due to the growing influence of Sunday Schools, evening meetings, and English preaching – to mention some of the most pertinent concerns. This group was relatively small compared to the Ontario Conference, but today it is growing faster than the conference Mennonites (mostly due to large families).⁵ With further schisms within this group, there are now three distinct Old Order groups in Ontario that use horse and buggies as their main form of transportation, but the original group is still by far the largest. In many ways they are similar to their Amish cousins (who broke away from Mennonites in 1693), yet most of them are more progressive in their use of technology like electricity and tractors.

Analyzing Old Order Mennonite spirituality runs counter to their entire way of life and thought because, like their ancestors, they reject a rational analysis in favour of a simple faith lived out in obedience to God. Their typically unspoken and decidedly pragmatic spirituality is exemplified in this statement from an Old Order school teacher: “We just feel it; it’s part of our lives, but nobody teaches it really.” In reality, however, everyone is expected to mirror the communal spirituality which is understood as strengthening and protecting sacred truth. For example, virtually everything that this community does, from its choice of tractors or buggies to its style of clothing, is part of the practical spirituality that maintains and strengthens the community (*Gemeinde/Gemeinschaft*).⁶ What is most important to this community is a practical and simple humility (*Demut*) attained in fear and trembling before God and portrayed by a meek and quiet spirit in relation to brother, sister and church. For this reason, intellectual theorizing about spirituality is understood as a waste of time and an opportunity for pride (*Hochmut*) in one’s knowledge. While *Hochmut* leads to disintegration and isolation, *Demut* is essential to unity and well-being. Humility, and the related term *Gelassenheit*⁷ (surrender of self), are central concepts connecting this community

to their Anabaptist roots and shaping the spirituality that runs deeply through it.

Given these challenges, why would I risk explaining Old Order Mennonite spirituality, and from what point of view can I possibly do justice to explicating it? First, it is impossible to truly understand this group without giving attention to their faith, that is, their very reason for being. From the outside, it may appear to be a legalistic community; however, legalism alone will never sustain a community for any extended period. This does not mean Old Orders are free of legalism, yet for all of their humanness and faults I do not believe they would exist but for the deep faith in God that nurtures and gives their community cohesiveness. Second, my study of medieval spirituality, particularly the spirituality of early monasticism, provides an insightful new lens through which to understand the inner life that gives this group meaning and fortitude.

Though no direct historical succession is ever likely to connect early monasticism to twenty-first century Old Orders, there are some significant commonalities in the conceptions and practices of these two distant Christian communities. In the early sixteenth century, however, there is one important link between Mennonites and the influence of the monastic tradition in the person of Michael Sattler. Sattler was a significant early Anabaptist who had been the prior of St. Peter's Benedictine monastery and was instrumental in the writing of the Schleithem confession.⁸ The ascetic and monastic influences on early Anabaptism have been noted by numerous scholars, such as church historian Timothy George, who writes, "For many [Anabaptists] the Christian life was a kind of uncloistered monasticism that presumed a daily walk of holy obedience, prayer and praise."⁹ Examining Old Order Mennonite spirituality from a monastic perspective will help us gain a new understanding that goes beyond the earlier critiques. With this in mind, the focus of the discussion will be the core similarities; addressing the many differences is beyond the scope of this paper.

Early monasticism, which was informally birthed in the desert of Egypt and subsequently transplanted to organized communities across Europe, drew its inspiration from the early apostolic church and read Scripture through a radically Christological perspective. Compared with the rise of the church in the Roman Empire, monasticism signified a distinct withdrawal from decadence and power. Though it soon had to deal with its own supremacy, in its essential form, monasticism was a stark choice for the simplicity of the gospel call to "take up the cross and follow" Christ (Matthew 10:38; 16:24). It was a call to rigorous asceticism that was meant to imitate the suffering path of Christ and his apostles. Monasticism took Jesus' challenge to leave "houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children and fields" literally, (Matthew 19:29)

in order to be the “poor in spirit” who inherit the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3). The Sermon on the Mount is a central text for monastic writers and is expected to be put into practice. This difficult way of following in the footsteps of Christ is the inspiration for complete submission and obedience to the community “rule” that is typical of monasticism. Prayer and reading of Scripture multiple times a day were a central focus of early monastic practice, as was working with one’s hands including the menial tasks that sustained daily life. The central spiritual theme that informed the entire life of the monastery, however, was humility. This, of course, was simply a replication of what was most true of Christ: emptying (*kenosis*) himself to become human (Phillipians 2:7), being born in a stable, stooping to wash the disciples feet, detaching from the world, and ultimately dying.

The importance of humility and *Gelassenheit* in Old Order Mennonite life and thought has also been noted by various writers. Donald Kraybill and James Hurd observe the dominance of these concepts in their comprehensive study of the Wenger Old Order Mennonites.¹⁰ Humility informs practical and ethical issues such as clothing, carriages and churchhouses, and supports the underlying theology of nonconformity, nonresistance, community rituals, self-perception and salvation. “Humility is,” according to Kraybill and Hurd “an attitudinal characteristic of *Gelassenheit*, a characteristic that denotes a meek, obedient, and yielded personality,” making it the “queen of Wenger virtues.”¹¹ Echoing a spirituality of an earlier age, the Wenger *Ordnung*, which functions as a form of community “rule,” admonishes community members “not to think after high things, but rather to keep [themselves] lowly, and live in humility as pilgrims and strangers in this world.”¹²

Likewise, Donald Martin’s¹³ book on the Old Order Mennonites of Ontario points to the central role of *Gelassenheit* for community cohesion. “Without that spirit of yieldedness to the brotherhood, that complete resignation to God’s will, that self-abandonment and a total commitment to being a disciple of Christ one cannot maintain a fellowship based on voluntary devotion.”¹⁴ Yieldedness, resignation and self-abandonment are the marks of *Gelassenheit* and humility that historically have been understood as having both vertical and horizontal dimensions in relation to God and humankind. Humility, or *Demut*, and *Gelassenheit* are key anchors in Old Order spirituality that cannot be overstated. Simply stated, *Demut* identifies all that is acceptable and suitable in the community while pride, or *Hochmut*, is the epitome of flagrant community violation; these concepts pervade and filter everything in the Old Order community. Humility and pride are also the ultimate dialectical right and wrong of medieval Christian spirituality established by the vast influence of St. Augustine. The

ubiquitous use of *Demut* and *Hochmut* in Old Order life clearly reflects an early monastic spirituality.

No one was as influential in perpetuating the importance of humility as St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547) whose comparatively short “Rule” became foundational for western monasticism. Central to the legendary Rule of Benedict (RB) is the theme of humility that permeates its pragmatic communal context and makes it a “pre-eminently practical” spirituality. “The Rule” in Benedictine Columba Stewart’s view, “means little . . . unless it is lived.”¹⁵ In an era and tradition known for its ascetic excess, Benedict seeks to “set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome” and implores the abbot to be a “wise physician” who “has undertaken care of the sick, not tyranny over the healthy.”¹⁶

To modern sensibilities, the Rule has abusive and harsh views such as corporal punishment, banning and shunning, which, with the exception of banning, even Old Orders reject. However, for its period, Benedict’s Rule taught a relatively restrained use of asceticism and authority. The Benedictine tradition left an indelible mark on Western Christianity so that the sixth to twelfth centuries are frequently referred to as the “Benedictine centuries.”¹⁷ Within a couple decades of Benedict’s death, monastic communities sprang up in towns across Europe, becoming centers for social, intellectual and spiritual development. It is a form of this early Christian spiritual legacy that I see reflected in the Old Orders today, particularly in their serious, disciplined and practical order, separated from the distractions of the world and lived out in humble obedience to Christ.

Christ is the beginning point for Christian humility and its greatest archetype. In chapter seven of the Rule, Benedict articulates twelve steps of humility.¹⁸ He opens this chapter with Jesus’ words: “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:11; 18:14).” The Rule is interlaced with scriptural allusions much like Old Order preaching and early Anabaptist writing; furthermore, Christ is a central theme in all of these traditions. The Christological and bi-directional (down – up/humbled – exalted) quality of humility is captured in hymn No. 115 in the Ontario Old Order Mennonite *Lieder-Sammlung* which is found in the *Nachfolge Jesu* (following/imitating Jesus) section:

Oh this lowly life of Christ, who is pleased with You?
Will the spirit not surrender and follow this path
Which the Saviour Himself travelled and with Him all who
are good and pure,
That stand with Him in Light and Life, and do not care for
worldly lusts?

Oh my soul, be more humble! Down to the Saviour's feet I go;
 Why should I long suffer? Just because I am not brought low
 If I am now come further downward oh, how much better it
 would be!

Come, Oh Jesus, strengthen me to give my all most willingly.

Oh my heart, be more humble! Go forth in dust and ashes.
 What is then this pain to me if I am really humble?
 Suffering always bringeth joy if this sin I can now leave.
 Oh thou mine Emmanuel, anoint my poor soul.

Oh my heart, be more humble! In the wounds our Saviour bore
 Is where we will find sweet rest, because all else is but pain;
 So climb happily downward. Could I not be more lowly within me
 As my heart wishes to be, then all pain will have an end.

All of me must be more humble! Where humility is in truth,
 That is where we will find Jesus; true peace is also there.
 Oh, how nothing is my being! Let me recover in You!
 You, oh Jesus are everything, our all in all, in eternity.¹⁹

In an age of self-assertion and individualism this hymn is loaded with a theology of an earlier era. Like early monasticism, it points to the humble path which Jesus walked as well as the final goal where Jesus becomes "our all in all, in eternity." This hymn asserts the need to lower oneself in an act of humility which Benedict imagines is like the ladder in Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:12) so that "if we want to reach the highest summit of humility, if we desire to attain speedily that exaltation in heaven to which we climb by the humility of this present life, then by our ascending actions we must set up that ladder."²⁰ While Old Orders do not speak about a spiritual ascent, they do have a strong eschatological 'heaven awareness' that provides an eternal perspective to all their daily activities.

Humility, as noted in the above hymn, is about the annihilation of the ego self that leads to true meaning: "O, how nothing is my being!" ("*O wie nichts ist all mein Wesen!*") This apophatic and mystical phrase is typical of the fourteenth century German mystics who articulated a vernacular spirituality which was fundamentally inner and far more radical in its effort to cut off all human illusions and false attachments at their core in the soul.²¹ It was this goal that led Eckhart to craft the word and concept of *Gelassenheit*, which derives from the verbal root "*lassen*" and can have both a positive and negative meaning. Negatively, it means to "let go, to relinquish, to abandon," and positively it means "let" or "permit."²²

To let go of earthly attachment is to open oneself to God's indwelling and thus the possibility of finding what is most real about the self. This inverted view is noted by the hymn-writer above so that not being humble leads to suffering: "Why should I long suffer? Just because I am not brought low." Suffering derived from relinquishment of self, by contrast, leads to joy: "Suffering always bringeth joy if this sin I can now leave." The joy of suffering is a reality that Anabaptist martyrs frequently testify to in the *Martyrs' Mirror*. The joy and fulfillment of the humble self are also demonstrated in the lines, "As my heart wishes to be [more lowly], then all pain will have an end," and again; "That [humility] is where we will find Jesus; true peace is also there." These are mystical concepts in that they are transcendent realities beyond sense, time and space, yet at the same time can be present, lived realities.

Biblical humility is filled with paradox: the first will be last and the last will be first (Matthew 19:30; 20:16); the least is the greatest (Matthew 18:4; Luke 9:48); down (humility) leads up (exaltation) and up (pride) leads down (humiliation) (Matthew 18:4; Luke 14:11; 18:14); and those who lose their life will find it (Matthew 10:39). Humility and *Gelassenheit* lead to a new reality that is more real than the ego; in fact, it is where the ego finds its true identity. Other than the theology in Scripture and in their hymns, Old Orders do not speak much about the human relationship with God, but they do frequently acknowledge their personal relationship to community and the deep inner joy that comes from submission to community. This is evidence of their exceptionally pragmatic spirituality.

Embedded in the humble psyche of Old Orders is a serious reverence and respect for the final authority of God which derives from the biblical 'fear of God' theme. Fear, in this sense, is not so much an emotion as it is reverence, respect, earnestness and genuineness. The Anabaptists listed "fear of God" as the first topic in the sixteenth-century *Biblical Concordance of the Swiss Brethren* and they referred to it ubiquitously. For example, one martyr's final letter to her children began with the admonition to "fear the Lord" and be "instructed by those who fear the Lord."²³ As I noted in an article on the *Martyrs' Mirror*, "Fear of the Lord was understood in Anabaptist spirituality as the essential and only way to approach God, and it was acclaimed as the foundation of wisdom and truth, the way to righteousness and joyful existence. The Anabaptist emphasis on fear of God resulted in fearlessness of people, which translated into a bold witness."²⁴ Undoubtedly the *Martyrs' Mirror*, which may be second to the Bible in importance to Old Orders, is a significant influence for understanding the fear of God and humility. The theme, however, has a long history in monasticism.

In Benedict's Rule, fear of God is the very first step of humility and takes up more than a quarter of the treatise on humility, indicating its foundational role.²⁵ This posture of the heart is the essential self-knowledge that recognizes human inadequacy in the face of a sovereign God. It is an attitude that precedes and accompanies repentance and submission of self before God and this ultimate surrender is the basis for letting go (*Gelassenheit*) of one's own will in community. Reciprocally abandoning self to community – which is the body of Christ – means that one surrenders to God who in turn gives ultimate meaning to life. “The emphasis on the fear of God” says Martin, “has been carried down into the Old Order Mennonite churches. Such an emphasis discourages boldness and frivolity within the group. Conversely it promotes an air of sacredness and a high level of respect for their faith and God.”²⁶ This is no momentary, emotional conversion experience; rather it is an endeavour to be free of self and must be cultivated and practiced in every aspect of life. Old Orders endeavor to instill this fear in their children from an early age by limiting children's willful tendencies and making sure they live within the parameters of a well structured home and community. Reverence is nurtured by silent prayer before meals, Bible reading, sitting quietly in church, respecting teachers, obeying parent's firm guidelines and observing parent's respect and obedience for church authority. According to an Ontario Old Order, Isaac Horst, the fear of God is also mentioned in the wedding vows.²⁷

For both Benedictines and Old Orders, fear of God is the elementary ground for repentance, reverence, submission, obedience and humility. This is a far more important theological concept than forensic salvation for it is both the model and the means to the submission and obedience of following after Christ. As Martin explains, “to the Old Order Mennonites salvation means discipleship in the fear of God.”²⁸ The fear of God is central to Old Order salvation, which is also accompanied by an eschatological awareness. It keeps in focus the brevity of life and a continuous consciousness that this life is only a preparation for eternity. This perspective is reinforced by living close to the cycle of seasons, crops, animals, food, and family. Plowing a field, butchering, canning, living in the same house with elderly parents and grand-parents, and attending a funeral are all potential moments to reflect on the seasons of life, its brevity, and one's complete dependence on God. The fear of God and the closeness to the earth are both qualities of the lived spirituality that is more existential than doctrinal in the Benedictine and Old Order traditions.²⁹

The steps of humility in Benedict that follow the foundational fear of God are mostly practical and relate to living in community. In the Rule, the second step of humility is learning to will what God wills which imitates Christ through action, but more practically, the third

step says that humility leads to submission and obedience of one's superior. This is also the practical reality of humility for an Old Order – for as Martin puts it, “the Old Order request, no, they expect a total submission and obedience of members to the brotherhood.”³⁰ Where early Benedictine obedience appears to be more hierarchical in its leadership,³¹ Old Order obedience is more community oriented. Both traditions, however, require obedience in humility, and this is what gives it meaning as one truly submits from the heart rather than from a legalistic obligation. In other words, this must come out of an inner *Gelassenheit* and not simply self-willed action.

In the eighth step of humility, the monk is admonished to do only what is “endorsed by the common rule . . . and the example set by his superiors.”³² The Rule of Benedict was not a legalist set of prescriptions that were to be blindly followed. Rather, much like Old Order *Ordnung* (order/rule), its function was to bring order, stability and purity. Thus the *Ordnung*, which helps to preserve healthy community spirituality, is open to questioning and change even though it holds a holy role, but this must be approached in a spirit of humility. Furthermore, the *Ordnung* never changes quickly and only after much consultation and discussion. Community rule of the Old Orders is a holy order that ranks in sacredness with God's Word much like Benedict's Rule does for the monastic community. The Old Order would agree with Benedict's wisdom that, “the good of all concerned . . . may prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love.”³³ The Benedictine Rule was an extension of scriptural principles and given the same respect as Scripture, similar to the role of the *Ordnung* in an Old Order context, but in both traditions there is an openness to redefine human rules. Martin says that “to an outsider *Ordnung* appears to be bondage... but to those who have learned to love and respect the *Ordnung*, it presents more freedom, more privileges, and more peace than can be obtained outside the brotherhood.”³⁴ Of course this only makes sense if humility and *Gelassenheit* are understood to mystically give birth to a new inner reality that inverts the desires of the ego.

When counsel is needed in the monastery, Benedict recommends that “the abbot shall call the whole community together . . . and after hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder it and follow what he judges the wiser course.”³⁵ The abbot must be humble and show restraint and likewise “the brothers . . . are to express their opinions with all humility, and not presume to defend their own views obstinately.”³⁶ Benedict is even open to the possibility that God may sometimes speak through the younger members,³⁷ yet the monastic life normally revolves around the wisdom of seniority based on their length of stay in the monastery.³⁸ These various concepts can also be seen in

the Old Order community. For example, seniority of age is visible in the church seating arrangement where the oldest men and women sit on the front benches; also there is an understanding that older members are the ones to give counsel. Sounding much like a monastic exhortation, Martin writes, "A novice should learn in silence or express his concern in private to the ministry and other aged members."³⁹ In the annual calendar of appointments booklet, which lists the meetinghouses that will be used on a given Sunday, bishops, ministers and deacons are listed in chronological order of their ordination, not age; it is the longest ordained bishop who is the lead bishop at the biannual conference.

In many ways, leadership in an Old Order community is similar in spirit to the Rule. A biannual preparatory service precedes communion where the concerns of the older members are expressed to the ministry. The ministry in turn takes these shared concerns to the biannual conference where the ordained men from all the churches spend a day discussing the concerns of the broader community. It is not the bishops' prerogative to simply make a decision; all the ordained men collectively, humbly and carefully recommend a direction that is in keeping with the moral authority of the community. Decisions are not by a democratic majority, but rather by consensus and thus, at times, bishops or ministers must give up their personal preference for the sake of the church even as laity gives up their personal preferences. The *Gelassenheit* required for the laity is also essential for leaders to an even greater degree because they must be role models of humility. They hold to a model similar to the one outlined by Benedict, who said that the abbot should lead "more by example than by words."⁴⁰ In both Old Order and monastic communities humility is viewed as an ongoing development that should mature with age. Humility is extremely important for it is the very fiber that holds the community together and makes its functioning possible as a mutual respect and patience is displayed.

The difficult way of following after Christ is noted in the fourth step of humility in chapter seven of Benedict's Rule. It demands followers to demonstrate humility and obedience that endure in "unjust conditions" and "embrace suffering," and invokes Christ's command to turn the other cheek, surrender coat and cloak and "bless those who curse you." (Matthew 5:39-41; 1 Corinthians 4:12; RB 7:35; 42-3) Elsewhere in the Rule, Benedict writes, "Do not repay one bad turn with another (1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9). Do not injure anyone, but bear injuries patiently. Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27). If people curse you, do not curse them back but bless them instead."⁴¹ These same biblical injunctions are also fundamental to the core Old Order teaching on nonresistance, which persisted through two World Wars nurtured by an ethos of *Gelassenheit*.⁴² Nonresistance, however,

is far more than a response to war, rather this way of yieldedness is to be lived daily with a meek and quiet spirit that accepts injustice and absorbs suffering rather than standing up for one's rights. Old Orders strongly reject litigation and endeavor to make peace even when it is costly. They resonate with the Rule which states, "Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ. If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with him before the sun goes down."⁴³

Nonresistance is one manifestation of humility, but Old Orders can also be exceedingly stubborn⁴⁴ when their sensibilities and beliefs clash with modern values, illustrating the strength that comes from true humility. For instance, the Ontario Old Orders have determinedly petitioned the government for exemption from programs such as Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan because of the way it undermines their community values. They want to support their own people and not rely on government programs. In another instance, the Ontario government passed a law that would have forced the Old Orders to install a costly water purification system in all their schools. After numerous discussions with no resolution, the Old Orders simply disconnected the water supply lines to their schools, circumventing the government regulation. Only then did the government concede that they might find another means to deal with the situation. These are examples of passionate humility in action and are a reminder that this is a tradition that has a history of its members laying down their life for their religious convictions, yet at the same time standing up for what they passionately believe is right.

An important step of humility in the monastery is confession, which is done in the presence of the abbot (the fifth step of humility). Though ritual confession has not been part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, there is a strong sense of accountability to the community and both of these Christological communities vigorously seek purity of heart in action. With humility as a central spiritual motif, it is not surprising that in my interviews with Old Orders they frequently expressed that they were on a journey in which they fell short. Likewise they reject a strident assurance of salvation, believing that they are unworthy creatures at the mercy of God and humbly "hope" for eternal salvation. This stance also explains why they shun a triumphal tone that is typical of some evangelical streams.

The sixth and seventh steps of humility admonish a humility that is not only content with the lowest most menial tasks, but genuinely views oneself as inferior to others. This medieval self-trait is frequently expressed by Old Orders with self-effacing comments about the quality of their cooking or ability to do a given task. Ordained men habitually declare their limited understanding and imperfect speech when they address the congregation. This self-effacement has a tendency to be

disingenuous when overdone, but it certainly reinforces one aspect of humility. In this sense, humility also means refraining from the self-promotion of strengths or gifts, but rather waiting for others to notice. It is never acceptable to display one's strengths or exert one's preferences too boldly, unless, of course, it is the religious conviction of the community that must be upheld. Determining what constitutes religious conviction, however, can at times become convoluted and lead to serious internal strife.

The final four steps of humility (9-12) address the monks' demeanor: undue conversation, jesting speech, idle laughter and the proper bearing and behaviour of a humble monk. These issues are just as pertinent for an Old Order today as they were for Benedict's monks in the sixth century. Though Old Orders take life seriously, it does not mean that they do not have fun, rather it is humility that makes it possible to find enjoyment, satisfaction and gratitude in even the simplest things. An event like a family day trip to the lake or Niagara Falls may be a once in a childhood event to cherish for many years. Benedict's expectation that humility will be visible in community also resonates with Old Orders who scrutinize everything to determine whether any given object or action displays pride or humility. For example, Horst notes that "decorating walls with pictures, even with flashy wallpaper, does not show a humble spirit." Likewise, in regards to the growing popularity of covered buggies in Ontario, Horst says that if "decorations and displays of pride become evident in the new type and use of vehicles, it will prove what motive was behind the change of vehicles."⁴⁵ The point is that humility must be lived or it is nothing at all and that true humility will be visible for all to see; this is a position with which Benedict certainly agreed.

The twelve steps of humility are an eclectic and unsystematic cluster of concerns, but what ties them together is the desire for spiritual development that is both inner and outer. Though the steps are inclined to practical concerns, Benedict makes it clear that the pinnacle of humility is "perfect love of God which casts out fear (1 John 4:18)."⁴⁶ This results in a new being so that "through this love all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue."⁴⁷ St. Benedict did not envision training his monks simply to perform, but what he had in mind was a complete transformation of the person into a new creation. If we go back to the very first step of humility, keeping God's absolute sovereignty ever in mind, all the steps of humility can be viewed as an emptying of self to allow God to inhabit that space (although they are not progressive steps). In this regard, practical rules are not an end in themselves, but rather a means to an end: the transformation of

the individual will into the will of God. For both Benedictines and Old Orders, this is the ultimate reality and the place where lasting joy and peace are found, not simply in keeping rules.

These two traditions appear to favour the pragmatic over the mystical, yet if mysticism in its most basic definition is “an immediate consciousness of the presence of God”⁴⁸ as the esteemed scholar of mysticism, Bernard McGinn alleges, then we need to consider this more carefully. The early Anabaptists reacted to Roman Catholic sacramentalism, yet in their understanding of the church as the living body of Christ there remained a profound sacramental aspect. Thus the living Christ was understood as “really” present where the true church was gathered in much the same way that Christ was present in the Catholic Eucharist. Though the explicit teaching has been mostly lost in the Mennonite tradition, this implicit reality is displayed in the holy respect that Old Order Mennonites have for the church. In fact, through humble self emptying and letting go (*Gelassenheit*), the self and the body of Christ become one so that, as Martin depicts it, “where the individual stops and the brotherhood begins is a blurred distinction.”⁴⁹ The church is not merely an institution that Old Orders are trying to preserve, but a holy reality that is existential and to be lived. The rituals such as Sunday worship, baptism, foot-washing and communion convey a sacred participation in an intangible truth beyond normal sensory perception. Perhaps the most holy moment of all is ordination, which frequently elicits deep emotion. Kraybill and Hurd call Wenger ordination “a rite of divine intervention, a moment when the church experiences God’s presence in a special way.”⁵⁰

In both the early monasticism of Benedict and the Old Order traditions there is a definite expectation for some kind of encounter with God, although this is not the dominant focus nor is it the topic of much discussion. The main objective is faithfully following after Christ and only subsequently does the end goal of the kingdom of God come into view. Although the general expectation is that this will come to pass in all its fullness in the next life, there is the prospect that this reality is now, and as we noted above, this hope is most explicit in Old Order life in the gathered community. The fear of God motif paradoxically provides an I-God consciousness that is only realized in a keen sense of one’s distance from God; in fact at this very juncture the soul opens itself to the possibility of encounter with God. The encounter with the Divine is the ultimate fulfillment of the progression of fear of God, self-denial and humility, where the human will becomes one with the will of God.

This reality is frequently heard in the testimonies of the Anabaptist martyrs, yet with the end of persecution Mennonites have been mostly silent about this mystical knowledge. Divine encounters are not limited

to the gathered congregation; one older Old Order farmer related to me his experience of restored peace in the middle of the night when sleep was impossible as he sat under the starry heavens. Given the intense I-God awareness in the fear of God crucible, the pace of a horse and buggy travel, and their intimate reliance on and connection to the earth, it is not hard to imagine that Old Orders may have many such holy moments that invigorate and bring meaning to the deep longing of the soul for the Divine. The ever present danger of pride prevents Old Orders from speaking glibly about their personal experience with God, and rightly so. In fact they express puzzlement about how some Christians can 'do' the spiritual talk and yet not 'live' it out in their lives. This brings us back to the most fundamental thing in Old Order life, which is the growth of a *Gelassenheit* identifiable through one's actions.

In many ways the farm is to Old Orders what the abbey is to monks. Where the monastery is marked by walls, the Old Order community is manifested by rural farms and homes disconnected from the high speed technological world and isolated by horse and buggy travel. This physical separation from the influences of the world and the daily interaction of the entire family working together is noted by most Old Orders as foundational to their spirituality and to their group survival. They do not feel that any given technology is inherently immoral nor do they rely on doctrinal reasoning for rejecting a specific technology. What motivates their pragmatic discipleship is an instinctive concern to protect community at all costs, and this comes out of their "feeling" spirituality, which is more instinctive or mystical than rationalistic.⁵¹ In regards to the automobile, Isaac Horst makes a classic Old Order statement: "I see a much greater danger in what it would do to our young people, letting them 'get away from the watchful eye of the parent.'"⁵² So it is for many of the Old Orders I interviewed; it is not personal conviction from clear biblical commands that motivates their choice of technological restrictions but their desire to live a godly life. As one bishop stated, the danger of the latest electronic technology such as cell phones is that the youth can "put the world in their pockets." For Old Orders and the monastic community, the constant danger is the world with its skewed priorities that break down community and disrupt the peace of Christ.

Work is another area in which the Old Orders mirror priorities spelled out by the Rule. In the Old Order community, manual labour is expected so that men who do bookkeeping or school teaching are not the norm and there is some degree of stigma attached to such occupations. Besides prayer, Benedict expected his monks to work. "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor . . . When they live by the labor of

their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks.”⁵³ Understanding Benedict’s cultural context and how he redefined labour is important. As Jon M. Sweeney writes:

In the Roman Empire, slaves were acquired to do as much of the physical work as possible, and getting one’s hands dirty with manual labour was seen as a curse one was born into. But with Benedict, work became prayer, not to be distinguished from other kinds of mental prayer. Your hands are praying while building a table. Your body is praying not only in kneeling before the altar but in sweating in the fields to produce daily bread. Work was made holy by St. Benedict.⁵⁴

Work in the Old Order community is certainly important; the entire family is active from a young age and their close connection to the earth is inherently connected to the spiritual life of the community. Old Orders are feeling the pressure of rapid inflation of farm prices, which is compelling them to adopt more and more technology to keep up financially and thus encroaching on their spirituality. One retired Old Order farmer told me about his choice to farm simply like his father and how he feels that physical work is better for people. He talked about his concern for his grandson who works off the farm during the day and farms at high speed with mechanization at night. The sense was that something valuable was being lost and that this held a potential threat to the spiritual life of the community. In this regard, both the smaller reforming Old Order Mennonite groups in Kinloss, Ontario and the Orthodox Old Order Mennonites in Gorrie, Ontario have taken a greater anti-technology approach to this problem by limiting electrical and mechanical equipment to an approximately nineteenth-century level. This return to a simpler lifestyle is part of other changes which have, at their heart, a desire for a more spiritual community. In their effort to retain the older methods, these Old Orders mirror the reforming impulse of monastic groups such as the Cistercians who determined to get back to a more simple life and strict adherence to Benedict’s Rule. All Old Orders place a high value on manual labour and like the early Benedictines this is implicitly understood as a sacred responsibility.

The character of early medieval humility informs the Old Order to be restrained in every aspect of life. When it came to doing business outside the enclosure, Benedict urged his monks that “the evil of avarice must have no part in establishing prices, which should, therefore, always be a little lower than people outside the monastery are able to set, so that in all things God may be glorified (1 Peter 4:11).”⁵⁵ This exhortation is not a capitalist plan to beat out the competition, but a

manifestation of practical humility that views charging full price as unbridled selfish ambition. Many Old Orders resonate with this thinking so that in their financial dealings they tend to be overly scrupulous. They not only believe in living a simple lifestyle free of twenty-first century consumerism, but they also discourage the urge that feeds such lust by charging the highest prices possible. This is simply another practical expression of the all encompassing letting go (*Gelassenheit*) and humility that is at the heart of these two traditions and the practical ways in which these traditions live out their spirituality.

Spiritual leadership is a grave responsibility. The Rule states that “the abbot must know that anyone undertaking the charge of souls must be ready to account for them . . . Let him realize that on judgment day he will surely have to submit a reckoning to the Lord for all their souls – and indeed for his own as well.”⁵⁶ Though the method of choosing leadership differs from monasticism, an Old Order leader’s direct accountability to God is similarly emphasized. Thus, as one deacon informed me, ordination is not something to be congratulated for, but a solemn and fearful undertaking for which one needs the prayer and support of the community. Though Old Order ordination confers divine authority, it is, as Mennonite historian James C. Juhnke puts it, “an authority of submission and humility, as Jesus submitted in humility to the will of God and to the cross.”⁵⁷ The eternal responsibility for the souls in their charge weighs heavy on Old Order ministers, a reality of which they are continually mindful. In keeping with their theology of humility, leaders and their families are expected to exhibit a more conservative lifestyle than the laity so that, as Benedict says, they “point out to [those under their care] all that is good and holy more by example than by words.”⁵⁸ In an era of slave, freedman and nobleman, the monastery was to be free of such distinction and the abbot free of favouritism.⁵⁹ Likewise, Martin says that “within the Old Order brotherhood all members are considered equal and, in theory, each person is to esteem his brother or sister in Christ better than himself.”⁶⁰ Though leadership looks different in these two spiritual traditions, they mutually have holy reverence for the office of leadership, which is to be lived out with exemplary humility.

The Old Order way of life, like monasticism, is a social and a spiritual paradigm that defies easy categorization. As one Old Order stated, “it is hard to define in mere words the pulses that are the life of a Mennonite brotherhood – it is so inter-woven, it is so inter-locked.”⁶¹ On the social level there is no unemployment in these communities and if there is a need the community works together to help. Physical needs such as the loss of a barn or house through fire is shared by the entire community both financially and through shared labour to rebuild. Multi-generation families frequently share a connected house so grandparents continue

to work till they are no longer able, at which time the immediate family provides care or receives respite help from neighbours or other family members. Some Old Order communities have “people helpers” who provide support and counseling to those who struggle with emotional or mental health. Old Orders refuse government health insurance and rely on the church to mutually absorb the cost of medical services. Funding for the parochial schools is similarly supported by all, not just by those who have children in school. Younger Old Order farmers struggling financially frequently have a committee of two or three older men who support and guide them. When there is a death a committee of neighbours is formed to help with farm chores and to plan and serve meals before, during, and after the funeral. Similarly, weddings are community events in which the family solicits support from others and hosts the wedding service and reception at the home of the bride.

Many of these things are ingrained, automatic responses that are part of the normal everyday framework of the community, but they are also a significant part of the pragmatic Old Order spirituality. This social spirituality has much in common with the spirituality of humility which Benedict spelled out in his little Rule that was founded on the example and teaching of Christ that puts others ahead of self and envisioned a community that worked and worshiped together. In both of these communities a reciprocal influence of belief informs culture, and culture shapes belief, so that the two are difficult to distinguish.⁶² This reality makes it extremely challenging for non-Mennonites to join an Old Order community because so much is unspoken due to the fact that the majority have grown up in it. In fact, with the many unspoken expectations and the vast network of family relationships, this may be a far more difficult community to integrate into than a monastic one. Even though much of this spirituality is taken up with the pragmatic life of community, many Old Orders told me that simply living the Old Order way of life is not enough. Unless one is on the journey of genuine fear of God and humility before God and humankind, continuously striving to live in *Gelassenheit*, all the rules and structure of community are pointless. The heart of the Old Order community is a deep faith and trust in God that is lived out authentically; without this existential reality, the outer reality is meaningless.

Conclusion

Some of the key characteristics of early medieval monastic spirituality are simplicity, community, obedience, withdrawal from the world, and self-denial, but the foundation is the central intertwined themes of humility and the imitation of Christ. Humility in this early

tradition began with the fear of God and was foremost concerned with an outward ascetical practice. Asceticism, however, was not viewed as an end in itself, but as the means to bring about inner change and a new ethic. Thus by following the Rule “the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God . . . Through this love all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.”⁶³ In the early monastic tradition the ascetic life leads to a new inner reality of Christ-like love, and in turn results in a new ethic.

Similarly, Old Orders have a pragmatic spirituality that limits contact with the world and maintains the clear expectation that an ascetic weaning from the excesses of the world leads to spiritual growth. Their spirituality has, at its centre, the imperative to follow after Christ in outer and inner humility, but the “rules” are mostly culturally embedded so that children learn the spirit of humility (simplicity, community, obedience, self-denial) at an early age through everyday life. The daily toil of raising and preserving food with its dependency on the elements are practical reminders that shape one’s early God awareness. Furthermore, scripture reading, singing, prayer and worship at church, school and home foster a thorough biblical and theological literacy. This tradition has its problems with systemic family failures like elsewhere, but in families where there is healthy emotional and psychological nurturing, the spiritual elements normally result in a maturity that leads to an adult commitment to God and the church.

Within the Old Order community, adulthood requires an intentional decision to follow Christ which is intimately connected to community, and this, in many ways, resembles that of the medieval monastic tradition. Though the monastic solemn vows may be more rigorous than that of the Old Orders, the latter group requires an adult confession of faith and commitment to the church confirmed in baptism. This is a grave undertaking that necessitates a maturity displayed in outward conformity to community order. Furthermore, it is not self-willed behavioural change; rather, it requires an inner change of the new birth. As in the medievalist tradition, this is a mystery where one yields the inner life with all its false illusions and attitudes, which distract from God. It is an inner encounter (mystical) that results in a real inner change of “being” that will be visible in the outer life. This is in sharp contrast to the modern Protestant “born-again” experience⁶⁴ with its theological articulation of justification by grace divorced from *Gelassenheit* to a community committed to an ascetic following after Christ. Old Order spirituality, with its adult commitment to an ascetic community that shapes and molds the inner surrender to God and

subsequently gives birth to a new being and a new ethic of love for neighbour, clearly parallels the medieval monastic spirituality.

As we have noted throughout this article, humility and its late medieval counterpart *Gelassenheit*, are central to Old Order spirituality. The rigorous application of humility to the outer life, its connection to following after Christ, and the expectation to grow in inner humility are reflections of the early monastic tradition. The importance of humility is on display in the first two and last two stanzas of hymn No. 53 in the *Lieder-Sammlung*, in a section titled “Inviting the Youth.”

Humility is the best virtue. It is the honour and glory of
Christians,
For it adorns our youth and the old much more,
Should it not stir us to praise that we have such a blessing.
It is more than gold or money, or what is great in this world.

See! Jesus was humble He did not exalt Himself;
He was friendly, loving, and kind; such is what the Bible tells
us.
In all His life, man found no big show or pride.
So He speaks to me and you: learn humility from Me.

I too want to be humble. Humility makes the heart pure:
All your actions should be humble; humility should be in your
heart:
Humility toward our friends; humility toward our enemies;
Humility toward my God; humility in the way of the cross or
scorn.

Out of this humility comes happiness and God’s grace in this
time;
And there with the Sun of Joy we find peace, light, and glory.
There will humility shine and receive the crown of honour
That which to man seems small here shines there in the
Gloryland.

As indicated in this song, for the Old Order, 1) humility is the highest virtue; 2) Christ is the paradigm of humility; 3) humility is to be sought inwardly by detaching from all that distracts from God and outwardly by loving neighbour and submitting to community rule; 4) an abundant life, salvation, joy and peace come from following the path of humility. In all these respects – as well as in the central role of a community withdrawn from the world and marked by an adult decision, simplicity, obedience and self-denial – Old Orders reflect an

early monastic spirituality. This spirituality, which has both inner and outer dimensions, is also a faithful witness to its Anabaptist roots and offers one interpretation of what that spirituality may look like today.

Notes

- ¹ In this article I do not distinguish between the various Old Order Mennonite groups because although there are differences they have a common theology and ancestry, as well as a shared spirituality. My understanding of Old Orders is informed by my parents, who both grew up Old Order, as well as having regular interactions with Old Order neighbours and relatives. More formally, during 2011-2012 as part of a SSHRC-funded Horse and Buggy Mennonite Research team led by Royden Loewen at the University of Winnipeg, I conducted thirty interviews with Old Orders in Ontario. I also visited a church, school and other events.
- ² For example, see Samuel F. Pannabecker, *Open Doors: A History of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1975). Pannabecker suggests that “1775-1850 may be regarded as the Dark Age in American Mennonite history . . .” (14)
- ³ For a more in depth examination of these issues, see Andrew C. Martin, “Mennonite Spirituality: A Reassessment of ‘Humility Theology’ in North America in the Nineteenth Century.” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXXV, no. 2 (April, 2011): 293-323.
- ⁴ John C. Wenger, “Old Order Mennonites,” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 2002, retrieved October 16, 2011, from <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/O544.html>
- ⁵ There are roughly 9,000 horse and buggy Old Order Mennonites in Ontario. The median age of the main Old Order group was 20 years old in 2010 whereas the Canadian median age was 37.6 in 2001 and 39.5 in 2006. (Statistic compiled by Josiah M. Weber)
- ⁶ Old Orders typically use the English term ‘brotherhood’ to speak about the church fellowship. They would generally associate ‘community’ with non-Old Order contexts, but for a non-Old Order audience I feel that the gender-neutral term “community” more accurately reflects the meaning of *Gemeinde* than the term brotherhood.
- ⁷ The term *Gelassenheit* was frequently used by early Anabaptists, but at some point the term fell out of use by the Swiss Mennonites who came to North America. In the twentieth century, Anabaptist scholarship has been responsible for renewing awareness and interest in this complex term, which has its roots in Meister Eckhart’s (c. 1260 – c. 1327) mystical theology. Thus the term is not original with Old Orders or commonly used in their communities, although it has been used extensively by Old Order historians and writers to describe the spirit of this group.
- ⁸ On the connection between the Swiss Anabaptists and Michael Sattler’s Benedictine formation see: John H. Yoder, trans. and ed., *The Legacy of Michael Sattler* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), 21, 25 n. 18, and 19, 87, 175 n. 10. Especially see, C. Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), which breaks new ground in highlighting Benedictine influence in Swiss Anabaptism. Thanks to Ivan Kauffman for pointing me to these sources.
- ⁹ Timothy George, “The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation,” in *Christian Spirituality, High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 349. Also see: C. Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of*

Christ: *The Anabaptist Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), who notes similarities with St. Benedict and the late medieval tradition; Kenneth Ronald Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism: A Study of Intellectual Origins* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1974); Werner O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement 1525-1531* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1977).

- ¹⁰ The Wenger Old Orders originate in Pennsylvania, but are now in numerous other states such as New York, Missouri and Wisconsin. They frequently fellowship with the Old Order Mennonites in Ontario, and there are also many old family connections, as Ontario Swiss Mennonites all have their roots in Pennsylvania.
- ¹¹ Donald B. Kraybill and James P. Hurd, *Horse-and-Buggy Mennonites: Hoofbeats of Humility in a Postmodern World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 43, 265.
- ¹² Kraybill and Hurd, 43.
- ¹³ Donald Martin is a member of the car driving Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference, a group that withdrew from the Old Order group in 1931 but which has retained some of the Old Order mentality in simplicity and theology. They continue to share some meetinghouses with the Old Orders.
- ¹⁴ Donald Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario: Gelassenheit, Discipleship, Brotherhood* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2003), 314-5. Regarding humility and *Gelassenheit* in Old Order communities, also see: Sandra L. Cronk, "Gelassenheit: The Rites of the Redemptive Process in Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonite Communities." (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1977); or a more concise version with the same title in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (January 1981): 5-44; and James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America 1890-1930* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 62-6, 83.
- ¹⁵ Columba Stewart, OSB, *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 14-5.
- ¹⁶ *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed., Timothy Fry, OSB (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press), Prologue 46; 27:2, 6-9. All further references to Benedict's Rule will be to this translation and noted with "RB."
- ¹⁷ Gilbert Huddleston, "Western Monasticism," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), retrieved May 17, 2012. <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10472a.htm>>
- ¹⁸ Actually it was John Cassian (c. 360-435) who first articulated ten marks of humility that were then converted by the anonymous Rule of the Master into the twelve steps of humility, and which were, in turn, largely adopted by St. Benedict.
- ¹⁹ *Lieder Sammlung: German-English*, 2011 (translated and published by an Ontario Old Order Mennonite committee), verses 2 and 7 omitted.
- ²⁰ RB 7:5-6.
- ²¹ Eckhart held up the nothingness of God (i.e. beyond time and space) as the definitive paradigm of *Gelassenheit*. In this view God is *Gelassenheit* – naked and empty – pure nothingness. God is completely free of everything created and thus "to be empty of all created things is to be full of God, and to be full of created things is to be empty of God." Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 288. Also see Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 164-171, 266-271, for the important role of *Gelassenheit* and its correlate *Abgeschiedenheit* in Eckhart and Johannes Tauler. The *Theologia Deutsch* also came out of this tradition and was an important influence on early Anabaptists. See: Harold S. Bender, "Theologia Deutsch," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1959 accessed September 7, 2012. www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/T538.html. Also see: Bengt Hoffman, "Introduction"

- in *The Theologia Germanica of Martin Luther* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 25, for the direct influence of this work on early Anabaptists.
- 22 John D. Caputo. *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 119.
- 23 Quoted in Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps*, 29-31.
- 24 Andrew C. Martin, "Toward an Anabaptist Spirituality: An Investigation of the Martyrs' Mirror in Light of the Theme of Humility in the Monastic Tradition," in *Brethren Life and Thought* (Fall 2011) Vol. 56, No. 2.
- 25 It was Snyder who first pointed out the mutual attraction to fear of God in early Anabaptism and in St. Benedict. See: *Following in the Footsteps*, 31.
- 26 Donald Martin, 28.
- 27 Isaac R. Horst, *A Separate People: An Insider's View of Old Order Mennonite Customs and Traditions* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000), 101-2.
- 28 Donald Martin, 317.
- 29 See: Dawn Ruth Nelson, *A Mennonite Woman: Exploring Spiritual Life and Identity* (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2010), especially chapter two, regarding her grandmother's early twentieth-century Mennonite spirituality connected to land.
- 30 Donald Martin, 125.
- 31 *RB*, 63, "Community Rank."
- 32 *RB*, 7:55.
- 33 *RB* Prologue, 47.
- 34 Donald Martin, 365.
- 35 *RB*, 3:1-2.
- 36 *RB*, 3:4.
- 37 *RB*, 3:3.
- 38 *RB*, 63.
- 39 Donald Martin, 280.
- 40 *RB*, 2:12.
- 41 *RB*, 4:29-32.
- 42 Donald Martin, 317.
- 43 *RB*, 4:72-3.
- 44 Donald Martin, 125.
- 45 Horst, 187, 240.
- 46 *RB*, 7:67.
- 47 *RB*, 7:68-9.
- 48 Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1991), xix.
- 49 Donald Martin, 40.
- 50 Kraybill and Hurd, 141ff.
- 51 Martin says that "the Old Order who were satisfied to 'feel' their religion had a 'distaste for disputing doctrinal points'" (111).
- 52 Horst, 135.
- 53 *RB* 48:1, 8.
- 54 Jon M. Sweeney, "What is the Rule of St. Benedict, and Why Would it Interest Me?" (2009) accessed May 10, 2012. <http://www.explorefaith.org/livingspiritually/benedictine_spirituality/the_rule_of_st_benedict.php>
- 55 *RB*, 57:8.
- 56 *RB*, 2:37-8.
- 57 James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America 1890-1930* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 63.
- 58 *RB*, 2:12.
- 59 *RB*, 2:16-22.
- 60 Donald Martin, 314.
- 61 Quoted in; Donald Martin, 125.
- 62 Donald Martin, 314.

⁶³ *RB*, 7:67-68.

⁶⁴ I would argue a subtle difference is that the Old Order “encounter” with God is not necessarily less emotional, but it is more mystical, and thus the emotional experience is secondary. It is an inner encounter that is beyond words and comprehension rather than the emotional-intellectual experience of a typical evangelical, which can be clearly articulated. Old Orders do not share publically about their encounter with God because this would put the focus on the individual rather than the community.