

Discussion Guide to A Convergent Model of Renewal: Remixing the Quaker Tradition in a Participatory Culture by C. Wess Daniels (Pickwick Publications 2015)

Introduction

“I don’t want to be an anti, against anybody. I simply want to be the builder of a great affirmation: the affirmation of God, who loves us and who wants to save us.” -Oscar Romero

- Discuss the first quote by Everett Cattell. What do you know of Cattell? As a small group do some quick internet research. How do you think his life may have informed this vision for renewal? What do you think he means by it? Where have you seen instances of renewal as a “falling to the ground and dying” around you?
- What does convergent mean? Is there anything surprising or challenging about the way this word is being used?
- What obstacles and opportunities do you see Quaker meetings/churches and yearly meetings facing?
- What are the three core impulses or “poles” within the convergent model? Why do you think these things are important for seeking renewal? Is there anything missing from this you think is essential?
- What other parts stand out to you about this chapter? What parts did you gravitate towards? Which parts did you struggle with? What questions are you left with?

Chapter One: Alasdair MacIntyre and the Ongoing Nature of Tradition

“Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name.” -Jaroslav Pelikan

- What is your experience with “tradition?”
- What is the connection between tradition and modernity?
- If tradition is a historically extended argument, what argument(s) do you think the Quaker tradition is making?
- What are the stages of the development of a tradition?
- What are the qualities of an apprentice and how does one become an apprentice to a tradition?
- What do you think Dandelion means when he says, “Everything is testimony that comes from God?”
- What is happening in the example of the gardener (p. 34)? And how does this connect to understanding the nature of tradition and practices?
- Where have you experienced “epistemological crises?” or the “Dissolution of historically founded certitudes?”
- Consider the “questions of continuity.” Where do you see these at work within your own tradition?
- What other parts stand out to you about this chapter? What parts did you gravitate towards? Which parts did you struggle with? What questions are you left with?

Chapter Two: Stephen Bevans and Mission: Developing the Synthetic Model

In the twentieth century the content of the gospel has often been described in terms of a dualism: word and deed, or proclamation and service. This would have impressed earlier generations as a strange construction. The Bible, for example, contains no discussion of strategies of “social service” or “evangelistic

preaching.” Nor is there any attempt to contrast one with the other or to establish the primacy of one over the other. We moderns have managed to introduce into our reading of the Bible a distinctively twentieth-century problem. (Shenk 1999: 20)

Confused their middle-class ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity. Their views about morality, respectability, order, efficiency, individualism, professionalism, work, and technological progress, having been baptized long before, were without compunction exported to the ends of the earth. (Shenk, 294)

Colonialism fostered a feeling among those who were colonized that anything that was really good and worthwhile was something that originated in the colonizing country and that what was in the colony was sketchy, of poor quality, only an imitation of the real thing. (Bevans 2002: 11)

- How have you thought about mission in the past? In what ways has this chapter helped add to or shift your understanding of mission?
- What are the ways in which tradition and mission might be pitted against one another?
- What impact has foundationalism had on the Christian practice of mission in the world?
- What do you think David Bosch means when he writes, “The gospel always comes to people in cultural robes.” How do you see this getting played out or ignored within your faith community?
- What are the three stages of development of the Protestant understanding of mission?
- What is contextual theology?

- How does contextual theology overcome some of the issues of other manifestations of “mission” in modernity?
- What are the six models of contextual theology? Are there any models you see as being connected to your particular faith tradition?
- What other parts stand out to you about this chapter? What parts did you gravitate towards? Which parts did you struggle with? What questions are you left with?

Chapter Three: Henry Jenkins and Participatory Culture

Participatory culture is anything but fringe or underground today. Fan fiction can be accessed in astonishing quantities and diversities by anyone who knows how to Google. Media producers monitor the Web forums such as ‘Television Without Pity,’ planting trial balloons to test viewer response, measuring reaction to controversial plot twists. Game companies give the public access to their design tools, publicize the best results, and hire the top amateur programmers. The amateur subtitling and circulation of anime arguably helped to open the market for Asian cultural imports. And meetup.com formed as a way for collectors to trade Beanie Babies; its impact was first demonstrated by X-Philes as they lobbied to keep their show on the air; but it became a central resource in the 2004 presidential campaign. News stories appear regularly about media companies suing their consumers, trying to beat them back into submission, and the blogging community continues to challenge the mainstream news media and shake up the political parties. (Jenkins 2006b: 2)

- How has the understanding and definition of “fan” shifted over the years? Why is this an important development for the underlying point of the chapter?
- Describe the differences between poaching and convergence, how do they build on one another? How are they different?

- How is “apprentice” being used in this chapter?
- What are the six features of participatory culture? Are there any that you feel particularly drawn too? Are there any that you have questions about or are unsure of?
- Which of the six participatory features do you interact with the most in your life? Are there any of these features that you see connecting to your practice of faith?
- What other parts stand out to you about this chapter? What parts did you gravitate towards? Which parts did you struggle with? What questions are you left with?

Chapter Four: A Convergent Model for Participatory Renewal

“Tradition is the only grounds for innovation.”

“Context is the catalyst to innovate.”

- What are the three key resources within your particular community or tradition that you see as core to who you are?
- Describe the difference between “unproblematic allegiance” to tradition and “large opposition,” where do you see this happening within your context, how does it get played out?
- Why do you think “Mission is essential for the existence of the church?” What do you think is meant here by “mission?”
- Can you name some of the liberated spaces or “cultural productions” that are within your community?
- Can you name areas of “remix” happening within your organization or faith community?

- Where are the places that are being opened up to many voices, a consensus based on new ideas or shifting the weight of authority in new directions?

Chapter Five: The Convergent Model and Early Quakerism

The gospel is free; the grace and mercy thereof free; the spirit a free spirit (freely given of God, and freely ministering for God); the church a spiritual building, built in the freedom and liberty of the life of the spirit; the order and government of the church is from and in the same free spirit, guiding a people whom God makes willing in the day of his power; the maintenance of the ministry a free maintenance; the whole obedience and worship free, in the free spirit, and in the truth which is begotten in the heart by the free spirit. The head of this church is Christ, the living spirit, who hath appointed none to be head under him here on earth, nor hath given power to any to make any laws concerning his kingdom, or the government thereof; concerning his ministry, or the maintenance thereof. -Isaac Pennington

- Was there any part of this history that was new to you or surprised you?
- Is there anything missing you think should be included here?
- What do you think were the reasons why early Friends resisted their culture at the “pressure points” they did?
- With things like hat honor and other critiques of ministry, do you see resonances with today’s context?
- Discuss each of the three practices: Remix, resistance and open work. How do you understand early Friends practicing the “convergent model of renewal?” Are there places where this framing is helpful? Other practices from early Quakerism you’d add to this?

Chapter Six: The Convergent Model and Freedom Friends Church

“We add to the fabric; we’re not a breach in the fabric.” -Peggy Morrison

Freedom Friends Church “highlights deep resonances with traditional Quakerism and unique interpretation of how those traditions could be lived out in a post-modern age.” -FFC Faith and Practice

“If this is from man, it will falter, but if it is from God, we do not want to stand in its way.” Gamaliel in Acts 5:33–39

- What stands out to you about this chapter? What do you find helpful from this chapter in regards to your own church, yearly and monthly meeting struggles?
- How would this play out similarly or different in your church/meeting?
- What do you see as some of the strengths of Freedom Friends?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages you see of Freedom Friends being an independent meeting?
- Where do you see leadership in your communities following or dismissing Gamaliel’s advice? What do you think creates a culture of one over the other?
- Discuss the various practices: what connections do you see in your own meeting to these practices of renewal? What other things is your monthly or yearly meeting doing that you see fitting into these categories?
- Are there other places you would like to see your church/meetings engages this model?