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INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES:

VITAL SYMBOLS FOR OUR TIME

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BY

ANDREW TENGWALL

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Introduction

"What is this world coming to?" A friend asked me this question yesterday, and my response was a condescending silence. Has any question been asked more, and meant less, than this one in recent times? In fact, this question, or some variation thereof, has probably been asked throughout human history. I chose not share with my friend my opinion of the meaninglessness of her question, but instead to reflect on what she meant. An acquaintance of ours had been shot and killed the night before in a random drive-by shooting, prompting the question originally, but her question reflected a deeper issue than even the random violence that floods national media. In the face of increasing violence among younger and younger people, in the face of increasing separation between people, in the faces of millions staring into computer screens instead of speaking with others, and in the faces of those who are not privileged to have such opportunities, what is lacking?

In response to the above crises, some cry out for "family values," some for education, some for building of relationships, some for more guns "so innocent people can protect themselves." The one thing people agree on is that things must change, but from that affirmation of change opinions splinter. Where is American society headed? Based on current the current international political situation, it is safe to assume that the United States will drag the rest of the world along on whatever path it takes; this question is not attempting to limit the scope to only American values. What do Americans value? Individual rights, money, prestige, and self-reliance are influential, while altruism, the

"common good," and basic compassion and respect for the needs of others are outmoded or naïve.

Individualism seems to be the dominant value in modern American culture. A history of wars, political battles, social movements, and televangelist demagogues, among myriad other influences, has confronted American society and at times infused it with strength and purpose, but more recently has commonly left people with little hope for anything other than personal gain in the form of the almighty dollar. Pure capitalism has infused everyone with an ethic of taking the most for oneself while giving up the least, and power over others is a close second to money in earning esteem. Multinational corporations connect money around the globe, turning faces and lives into statistics and profit margins, promoting only alienation and competition. Humanity cries out for order, for freedom from violence and economic oppression and freedom to once again live for others. People seek the revitalization of a dying sense of connectedness, for a sense of something hopeful or sacred, for an ethic of concern for others instead of for one's own material gain. People long for community.

Community and Christianity

Community is fast becoming an enigmatic word in the United States. According to Walter Capps, American society has shifted toward a "widespread loss of confidence in programs of collective action,"[1] increased reliance on personal resources, and a growing focus on the individual's needs and ambitions.[2] Communities are becoming more fragmented and losing their senses of purpose. Is community based on proximity, or common interests, or physical similarity, or is a community responsible for the well being

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[1] Walter Capps. *The Monastic Impulse*. (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 125.
[2] Capps, 125

of its members? In hearing the word "community" today, many think of it as a more geographical enterprise than as a group of people who support each other.

In *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah and his coauthors write about white, middle class American morality and the related loss of community in current American society.[3] They trace this matter, beginning with Alexis de Toqueville's observation that the individualism "might eventually isolate Americans from one another and thereby undermine the conditions of freedom."[4] Toqueville issued this warning in the 1830s, and since then American society has moved ever toward individualism; the examples in the beginning of this paper suggest that his predictions are coming true more and more often. While the writers of the United States Constitution valued freedom above all else, individualism has eclipsed freedom as the dominant moral value of American culture today.[5]

According to Capps, many who study modern problems of individualism turn to religion for answers;[6] Peter Berger goes so far as to frame his argument about the divisive ills of modern society as a religious question.[7] What might Christianity, the dominant religion in the United States, have to say to this rampant individualism? Christianity has always encouraged community; in fact, Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that, "Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus

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[3] Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton. *Habits of the Heart.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xliii
[4] Bellah, xlii
[5] Bellah, xliii
[6] Capps, 133. Some scholars and their works listed by Capps include Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness*, 1970; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1974; and Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 1978.
[7] Capps, 133. This statement refers to Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 1979.

Christ."[8] This definition of Christianity as community implies that community has value for Christians; in Christianity, individualism is less important than relationships.

Bellah includes a section on religion, concluding that when asked what they want from churches, the most common religious organizations, most Americans profess a need for personal intimacy.[9] A church is a voluntary community, and people want to be cared about and nurtured in this community. Churchgoers do not want the calculating, economical, impersonal world of everyday life to follow them into their religious organizations. Many hope for a respite from the individualism that draws distinctions and builds walls around them, and look to religion for a space within the culture of individualism in which true, caring, healthy community can occur.[10]

Some long for a more radical departure from the surrounding culture of individualism. What options are available to those longing for a lifestyle based on needs instead of materialism, a way of life that encourages growth of individuals through relationships with others, and a life oriented toward reconciliation instead of division? A radical change in lifestyle is not feasible for many, and maybe just plain scary to some. Besides, utopian social ideas and the like have failed time and again. Where can people lost in the sea of citizens-as-statistics turn for hope? Churches can function as helpful communities, and can direct people searching for meaning away from their material selves, but where do these churches look for inspiration and spirituality? A church can become jaded through constant struggle with individualism and materialism, losing its sense of itself as a Christian institution concerned with the pastoral issues of providing for and welcoming people in need. Where can individuals and churches look for an

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[8] Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Life Together*. Trans. John Doberstein. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 21
[9] Bellah, 237
[10] Bellah, 237

alternate model, a symbol of reconciliation and a witness to lived Christian discipleship in contrast to the individualism, disjunction, and lack of respect for humanity symbolized by the violence, economic oppression, and technological emphasis of our society?

Intentional Christian Community

Intentional Christian communities can function as a symbol of hope for modern American culture. As used here, an intentional Christian community is a group of Christian people who choose to live together for an extended period of time, sharing space and resources, and committed to living out a particular vision of Christian discipleship. Traditional and non-traditional monastic communities, family-based communities in the Anabaptist style, and retreat centers with long-term, live-in staff fit this definition. Despite perceptions that these communities are faltering today, and more poignantly that these communities fail because they are irrelevant to modern society, dynamic and vital intentional Christian communities can provide the very spark that rejuvenates people weary of individualistic, exclusivist, wholly secular life. Indeed, intentional Christian communities may be becoming increasingly relevant to modern life. Through careful analysis of current theories on intentional Christian community, as well as of four particular communities founded within the last century, this paper will demonstrate that vital and healthy intentional Christian communities can teach us lessons about and stand as a witness to the power and possibility of Christianity as we reach the 21st century. Their deliberate focus on relationships of various kinds provides a viable alternative to the increasingly individualistic culture of the West today.

A more in-depth definition of intentional Christian community is necessary. The Fellowship for Intentional Community has studied the term "intentional community,"

looking at the history of the term itself as well as what self-described members of intentional communities mean by the term for themselves.[11] The most fundamental element of intentional community, according to members of such communities, is shared goals or vision. This sense that people are living and working together toward a common goal or with a common understanding of their place in the world is key to exciting people about life in community. Common land area or physical proximity to each other is another basic aspect of community. Commitment is necessary in intentional community, though the object of such commitment can vary. A clear sense of purpose or goals focuses the commitment of community members. Intentional community often means sharing of material goods and economic resources as well. All of these elements, central to the life of an intentional Christian community, foster and rely on relationships between community members.

Christian discipleship is also a key concept in intentional Christian community. Rosine Hammett, CSC, and Loughlan Sofield, ST, define "religious community" as

> a group whose common goal is to live and spread the gospel. Membership consists of individuals who believe they have been called to live with others with a similar call. Community is not an end in itself but rather a life-style to support, nourish, and challenge the members to live the gospel more fully.[12]

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[11] Dan Questenberry. "Who We Are: An Exploration of What "Intentional Community" Means." [Online] 1996. Available 02.11.01 at http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.html. The FIC is a nonprofit organization created in 1948 and reorganized in 1986 devoted to supporting small intentional communities. This organization includes hundreds of communities, including three of the four communities I study in depth in this paper. In this study, Questenberry sent out a questionnaire to the member communities of the FIC, asking for demographic information and also asking for the community's definition of "intentional community." He received 25 responses, chronicled them and published them in the article. The purpose of my analysis of these responses was to look for patterns suggested by other sources on community. I had come across shared goals or vision, proximity, commitment, commonality of goods, meals, and acceptance of authority in a numerous other sources as potential aspects of intentional community, and I will later detail the roles these may play in the life and health of intentional communities.

[12] Rosine Hammett, CSC, and Sofield, Loughlan, ST. *Inside Christian Community*. (New York: Le Jacq Publishing, Inc, 1981), xxii

This definition captures much of what is important in intentional Christian community: a group with a sense of common call leading toward the common goal of living the gospel. Community is not an end in itself but rather is a means to facilitate the Christian discipleship implied in "living the gospel." As we will see later, the Sermon on the Mount and its rules for living with others are one common basis for a life based on the gospel. Jesus' basic social messages of caring for the poor and serving others seem to indicate a particular way of life; to put the needs of others before one's own needs and to uphold justice and peace may very well be to live the gospel.

For Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the purpose of any Christian life is to follow Christ in discipleship. Bonhoeffer does not specifically address intentional Christian communities but he does speak at length about his vision for the relationship between Christianity and community. For Bonhoeffer, God's grace allows Christians to live in community through Christ, and living in complete discipleship to Christ can be the only focus of Christian community. Any other focus—even a desire for or commitment to an ideal Christian community—is in Bonhoeffer's view only a "wish dream."[13] Human dreams for a community undermine that community's true call to live in Christ and to obey Christ.[14]

As part of the definition of true intentional Christian community, the primary commitment of any member of an intentional Christian community is to God; other commitments, such as to social justice or even to one's spouse, are secondary. The ability to follow God's desires for a community is predicated on the focus of that community toward God and not directly toward social goals and movements. God is sufficient for a Christian community, and only through God can vital intentional Christian community

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[13] Bonhoeffer, 26
[14] Bonhoeffer, 27

exist. [15] This orientation solely toward God is a defining characteristic of an intentional Christian community, and as we will see, the way the goal of Christian discipleship informs a community's actions is crucial to its health and vitality.

Intentional Christian Community Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

The Bible is replete with images of communities, from the chosen family communities to the Exodus to Israel to early Christian groups. The biblical book of Acts describes the very first Christians as living in community, sharing goods and proclaiming the Gospel in small groups. This depiction may not be entirely accurate, as Acts is much more a story than an objective history of the first Christians.[16] Still, the story certainly emphasizes the importance of community, which points to the importance of community among early Christians. Christian community has grown and changed in innumerable ways since the first Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers,"(Acts 2:42) and "were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common."(Acts 4:32) These verses in Acts became the biblical basis for any number of Christian groups, cited by everyone from canonized Roman Catholics to Anabaptist family groups living together.

Traditional monasticism is probably the form of intentional Christian community most familiar to many outsiders. The word "monasticism" comes from the Greek word *monos*, meaning literally "dwelling alone."[17] The first monastics left society for ascetic life devoted to God, often living in solitude. These "desert fathers" eventually gave way

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[15] Deborah Cerullo. "The Virtues of the Vows" *America* Oct 7 2000, 183: 6.
[16] Gail O'Day. "Acts." *Women's Bible Commentary*. Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, editors. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 394.
[17] Huddleston, G. Roger, "Monasticism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X*, 1911. Accessed 5 March 2001, available at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10459a.htm.

to cenobitic monasticism.[18] Traditional cenobitic monasticism has been a part of Western Christianity for over 1500 years.[19] The *Catholic Encyclopedia* calls St. Benedict of Nursia, born c.480 AD, the "founder of Western monasticism."[20] Benedict's *Rule* has influenced Christian conceptions of monasticism and community, and indeed Western history as a whole, since that time. Many reforms and differing visions for monasticism and its purposes have altered the shape of monasticism and spawned many orders with different goals and emphases.

Today traditional monastic communities are struggling. At Vatican II, from 1962-1965, sweeping reforms were introduced for Roman Catholic monastic communities, and the basic nature of Catholic religious life changed. Where it had been a known quantity, strict and rigid, religious life became a series of analyses of the old ways while struggling to live a new understanding of what it is to be religious in the modern world. Joan Chittister, OSB, says, "Religious life became a kind of social experiment."[21] Its entire history and present were dug up and scrutinized until the very purpose of religious life was to renew and revise religious life. These communities, so long steady and dependable, were swept away from the sense of purpose that had guided them for centuries, and upheaval ensued.[22]

Today these communities face declining membership, and many people, even community members, question the relevance of these communities to the world around them. Many writers on current monasticism take for granted this decline in numbers of

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[18] The word "cenobitic" comes from the Greek word *koinobion*, meaning "life in common."
[19] "Cenobitic Monasticism." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Accessed 5 March 2001, available at http://search.eb.com/bol/topic?thes_id=80909.
[20] Ford, Hugh Edmund. "Benedict of Nursia." *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II* 1907/1999. Accessed 1 March 2001, available at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02467b.htm.
[21] Chittister, Joan. *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life*. (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 33.
[22] Chittister, 33-34

persons willing to commit their lives to traditional monasticism. Norvene Vest, a Benedictine Oblate, notes that "A number of sources could be cited, but whatever our source of data, we will find that overall... the number of men and women religious is declining."[23] Roman Catholic religious have questioned the entire theory and practice of traditional monasticism since the reforms (and subsequent upheavals) in monastic life caused by Vatican II. Many have become disillusioned, and many have left their monastic homes.[24] Traditional monastic communities certainly face problems today, and many outsiders project their problems onto all current intentional Christian communities.

Another major kind of Christian community began to take shape in the sixteenth century during the Radical Reformation. Anabaptists formed family groups and lived in community, apart from the surrounding society, according to their interpretations of the Bible's directions for Christian life. Based on the biblical model of the early apostles in Acts, these groups continue to exist today. Families joining each other and sharing material goods try to live the gospel, providing for themselves and others as they can and depending on God's grace to thrive. These groups often stood in opposition to Roman Catholic ideals, including those of monasticism. John Hutter, a founder of this way of biblically-directed and family-based community life, was burned as a heretic in 1536.

Family-based intentional Christian communities continue to face negative stereotypes as well. In this age of rapid change and constant attention to the latest ideas and styles of anything and everything, traditional Anabaptist communities can be radically counter cultural. Many consider the older clothing styles and vastly different

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[23] Vest, Norvene, OblOSB. "Monastics and Oblates: Mutual Blessings." *The Oblate*, Vol. 3, No. 4. (, September/October 1999), accessed 1 May 2001, available at http://www.osb.org/oblate/oblate994/index.htm. Pages not given.

[24] Chittister, viii

social norms of groups to be so strange that the groups and their basic commitments are questioned. Such different ideals, especially when coupled with separatist or even exclusivist attitudes toward the outside world, can garner charges of any number of evils by uninformed outsiders. Many see family-based Christian communities only as attempts at social utopia, and thus as doomed to failure. The charge of cult-like behavior is a serious one against any group, and even unfounded accusations can hurt an intentional Christian community.

Despite all of these stereotypes and challenges to intentional Christian communities today, all intentional Christian communities hold at least some amount of promise for the future. The communities I have chosen to study in more depth—Taizé, the Bruderhof communities, the Jesus People USA, and Koinonia Farms/Partners—all began in the 20th Century, molding themselves very differently and with different social or historical emphases. These communities defy traditional definition; none is Roman Catholic, and only the Bruderhof communities align themselves with any movement of a time before the 20th century. The Bruderhof communities have adopted traditional Anabaptist (specifically Hutterian) community life and added activism and outreach to the nonviolent ideals of their spiritual ancestors. The Brothers of Taizé, formed in the 1940s, come from the mold of traditional Roman Catholic monasticism, but are an ecumenical community. The Jesus People USA came out of the Jesus People and counter cultural communitarian movements of the 1960s, drawing on differing resources to live the way they see fit. Clarence Jordan, the Southern Baptist founder of Koinonia, touted his community as a "demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God," attempting to erase racial boundaries through Christian discipleship in southern Georgia in the 1940s. Each

of these communities is unique and faces unique challenges; by studying those challenges as well as applying others' theories to these communities we can learn something of what it takes to be a vital intentional Christian community today. These vital communities can stand as symbols of relationships instead of individualism, reconciliation instead of brokenness.

Vital Intentional Christian Communities Today

Intentional Christian communities today do not always function as symbols of hope for the future. Many communities are in danger of extinction, and every community constantly faces challenges. Vitality is the measure of an intentional Christian community's stability and potential to positively influence the world around it. A vital community is one that is made up of healthy relationships inside the community. This fosters open and honest communication between members and between the community and the outside world, and enables the community to be open to change and adaptation. According to Chittister, the present state of a community is the source of a successful future. Vitality does not appear overnight; a community must cultivate vitality every day. Energy of heart, "commitment to a wild and unruly gospel,"[25] spiritual life, risk, intensity, and determination to live in accordance with one's self-description are all qualities of a healthy, strong, open, daring community of the future.

Relationships are key to the vitality and well being of any community. An interesting and informative definition of intentional community and standards of health thereof comes from Scott Russel Sanders. "A healthy community is dynamic, stirred up by the energies of those who already belong, open to new members and fresh influences...." It is also "Exuberant, joyful, grounded in affection, pleasure, and mutual

[25] Chittister, 38

aid. Such a community arises not from duty of money but from the free interchange of people who share a place, share work and food, sorrows and hope. Taking part in the common life means swelling in a web of relationships, the many threads tugging at you while also holding you upright."[26] People enter freely into community, sharing materially (place, work and food) and spiritually or emotionally (sorrows and hope). The ability to be dynamic and open to things new and fresh is key to any group of people in the world today. Healthy relationships within a community and a healthy relationship with change characterize vital community.

"Religious community is nothing less than the network of relationships among persons who experience a mutual call to the service of the Lord."[27] Between members, between leadership and others, and between the community and visitors or other outsiders, healthy relationships can and must exist if a community is to remain vital. The official Covenant for Jesus People USA states that, "For ourselves, we find a covenant more an outgrowth of relationships than their cause."[28] A community is a series of relationships, and the health of those component relationships will directly affect the health of the community as a whole. This network will falter without communication between members. Open, honest communication can relieve anxieties, unify purpose, and bring expectations closer for different members, but every community faces these challenges. Members of any community must openly discuss their goals to ensure that

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[26] Scott Russel Sanders. "The Common Life." In *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place.* Vitek, William and Wes Jackson, editors. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996): 45-46.
[27] Hammett and Sofield, 64
[28] "The JPUSA Covenant." *Cornerstone Magazine*, Volume 22, Issue 102/103, (1994): 19. Cornerstone is a publication of JPUSA.

they are all working toward the same ends and that progress is being made toward these goals.[29]

The *Rule of St. Benedict* emphasizes honest and authentic relations between community members and with those outside the community, and frames this discussion in terms of the Ten Commandments. Columba Stewart interprets Benedict as implying that the foundation of any Christian community is the practice of keeping the commandments.[30] These commandments are not only favorable to God but also are necessary for people to live together in community. The three Evangelical Counsels of traditional monasticism are meant to collapse many of the commandments or to limit the opportunities for those commandments to be broken. The rules of any intentional Christian community are meant to improve relationships because without healthy individual relationships any community is lost.

Challenge

The test of a community's vitality comes precisely in the struggles a community faces. Cultural expectations, inter-community struggle, and many other factors challenge intentional Christian communities today. Vatican II's complete upheaval of traditional Roman Catholic monasticism is a clear example of a modern challenge, and Chittister, whose life is bound up in this struggle, argues that the situation presents an opportunity for future growth. Bonhoeffer wrote that challenges make communities stronger, focusing energy on the true goals of the community and leaving the unnecessary behind. A community's response to adversity is perhaps the best indicator of its vitality. Struggles bring out the true strengths and weaknesses of any community. In adversity a community

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[29] Hammett and Sofield, 85
[30] Stewart, Columba, OSB. *Prayer and Community*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998): 75-76

must either learn new coping mechanisms and grow in unity, or stay stagnant and splinter.

The specific challenges and threats, successes and failures of the four communities I focus on—Taizé, the Bruderhof communities, Jesus People USA, and Koinonia Farm/Partners—can provide insight into how intentional Christian community can remain vital and dynamic today. Relationships within these communities and relationships between these communities and the outside world can act as witnesses to the possibilities of peace, reconciliation, and community so desperately needed in modern American culture. Vital intentional Christian communities can provide hope and inspiration to Christians and anyone who longs for an alternative to a culture of individualism, materialism, and broken relationships.

Four Intentional Christian Communities

Taizé

Brother Roger, the founder of the intentional Christian community of Brothers at Taizé, describes the goal and calling of the community.

> What are you, little community, spread out in different parts of the world?
> -A parable of communion, a simple reflection of that unique communion which is the Body of Christ, his Church, and therefore a ferment in the human family.
> What is your calling?
> -In our common life, we can only move forward by discovering over anew the miracle of love, in daily forgiveness, heartfelt trust, and peace-filled contemplation of those entrusted to us. When we move away from the miracle of love, all is lost, everything comes apart.
> Little community, what might be God's desire for you?
> -To be made alive by drawing nearer to the holiness of Christ.[31]

[31] Roger, of Taizé, Brother. "The Community." Taizé, France: Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 1997. Accessed 3 March 2001, available at http://www.taize.fr/en/index.htm?page=/en/encomtop.htm.

The community sees itself as a "parable of communion," demonstrating the unity of the Body of Christ, and wants only to be "made alive" by drawing nearer to Christ in intentional community. Called to live and to "move forward" in love, the Brothers' interactions with others are marked by forgiveness and trust. At Taizé reconciliation is lived out as a model for reconciliation at of others. The Taizé community sees its call as one of reconciliation between peoples, nations, religious groups, and individuals, through the joyful love of Christ.

Taizé is a small French village, home since 1949 to an ecumenical religious community.[32] Roger Schutz was a Swiss student of theology in 1940 when he bought an old farmhouse in the tiny village and began to house World War II refugees. Schutz renovated his farmhouse with the help of refugees, and by 1942 two other Swiss Calvinists had joined Schutz in Taizé. Slowly more young men came to join the small Taizé community, and on Easter Sunday 1949, seven brothers first pronounced a lifelong commitment to the community.[33] This road was difficult; the 80 or so inhabitants of the village were secular Catholics and did not trust outsiders. Their trust was to be won through years of hard work and dedication on the part of the community.

From the start, Schutz and the other members of the Taizé community reached out to Christians of varying backgrounds for guidance and help in building their community. Schutz returned to Switzerland from 1943-1945 and finished his pastoral dissertation, titled "The Monastic Ideal Until Saint Benedict and Its Conformity with the Gospel." A Calvinist dissertation on this topic was strange, but Schutz defended and clarified his ideas as he shared them with others of his tradition. Schutz met with Catholic Priest Paul

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[32] Roger, "The Community"

[33] Heijke, John, C.S. Sp. *An Ecumenical Light on The Renewal of Religious Community Life.* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press 1967): 15

Couturier in Lyon and convinced him to offer a Mass in the long unused Romanesque Catholic Church in the village.[34] Use of the village church was limited for the community until Easter Sunday 1948, when they were first allowed by the Catholic Church to hold a Protestant communion service. Community members visited Anglican religious communities in 1947 to further educate themselves about the possibilities of non-canonical Christian community, and to further ecumenical ties.[35] Despite the aloofness of their neighbors and the prevailing anti-ecumenical attitude of those times, Taizé remained open to communion with all through Jesus Christ.

The community's unique status as a Protestant monastic order and focus on ecumenical reconciliation drew interest and visitors, and the community grew. Eventually so many visitors came to Taizé that the community began to see hospitality as one of its fundamental calls. While some wanted to keep a more traditional separateness and solitude, Roger and others felt that openness to the experiences of others was vitally important to a group devoted to reconciliation.[36] In the 1950s the community chose to send small "fraternities" of brothers to poor areas in order to express solidarity with impoverished people. This program has expanded considerably, and now every brother spends some time living around the world in solidarity with the poor.[37] Brothers come from many religious backgrounds, including many mainline Protestant denominations and Roman Catholics.

The community at Taizé has grown steadily since those humble beginnings, and now there are about 100 brothers, of whom around 70 are in Taizé at any given time.

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[34] Heijke, 26
[35] Heijke, 29
[36] Hicks, Douglas. "The Taizé Community: Fifty years of Prayer and Action." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, (Spring 1992), 209.
[37] Hicks, 206

Others are involved in missions of solidarity with the poor in such places as Hell's Kitchen, New York, Bangladesh, Rome, Calcutta, and Haiti. Brother Roger has become an international religious figure. He was invited to attend Vatican II by his close friend Pope John XXIII, and has coauthored books with Mother Theresa. The most famous development of Taizé, however, has been the hospitality shown by the community to thousands of young people from around the world each year. Christians from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities flock to Taizé to taste the life of prayer and simplicity that characterize the community life of Taizé. Up to 6000 visitors, mostly between the ages of 16 and 30, inhabit giant circus tents at Taizé during summer weeks. Only a few hundred visit each week during the winter, but the community is open to all 51 weeks of the year. Between Christmas and the New Year the brothers prepare for their annual European meetings in cities, when as many as 50,000 young Christians from around Europe and the world come together to pray and to support ecumenism and reconciliation.

Taizé is organized around *The Rule of Taizé*, first written in 1952 by Brother Roger. Everyday organization is based on the *Rule* and on the Prior and the Council, comprised of all Brothers who have made full profession.[38] The Prior makes major decisions and does not need to follow the majority of the council, but must consult them on large decisions. The *Rule* encourages the Prior to make provisional decisions that can be overturned later if necessary, indicative of the spirit of openness and flexibility that characterize Taizé.[39] Brother Roger has been the Prior for over 50 years, and still is responsible for decisions, though recently his authority has been somewhat deferred to others due to his increasing frailty.

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[38] Communauté de Taizé. *The Rule of Taizé*. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 43.
[39] *Rule of Taizé*, 42

The Brothers make a commitment to celibacy, abiding the authority of the Prior, and community of goods, in line with the Three Evangelical Counsels—poverty, chastity, and obedience—of traditional monasticism.[40] Their professions take place on Easter Sunday and are simple by traditional monastic standards. The community shied away from lifetime commitments at first, wanting to remain open to God's call wherever it led.[41] The Brothers soon realized that devotion to God in community requires a lifetime commitment, and a lifetime commitment is now required. The focus of the Taizé commitment is on God's trustworthiness and sovereignty, and the Brother's promise to live in commitment to God with these characteristics in mind.[42]

Taizé is very well known for its music and prayer life. Songs of Taizé consist of short phrases and simply harmonized melodies. The songs, repeated many times over, are to become meditative prayer as the words break through one's analytical consciousness to an experience of communion with Christ through music. A typical Taizé-style prayer service is contemplative and lighted as if by candles. Silence, meditative chant-like songs, short scriptural passages, and prayers comprise the basics of Taizé prayer. Many songs are translated into various languages, and Taizé's emphasis on reconciliation is particularly poignant when people sing each in their own language. Peace and longing for reconciliation shape the mood of Taizé services. Silence is a time of individual prayer and reflection, while in song the many voices and differing languages remind one of the interconnectedness of humanity despite differences.

Taizé is clearly not secluded from the world, and has a clear vision of itself in relation to the secular world and the world of divided Christianity. Through prayer,

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[40] *Rule of Taizé*, 7
[41] Heijke, 47
[42] Heijke, 49

service, hospitality, music, and mission, the young community at Taizé thus far has lived up to its goal of being a parable of communion and a beacon for reconciliation between peoples of differing Christianities, languages, nations, and ethnic backgrounds. Taizé's spirit of joy, simplicity, and mercy are lived out every day both in their community and through their actions throughout the world. More on Taizé's challenges for the future and what we can learn from Taizé will come in the Conclusion.

Bruderhof

The Bruderhof communities are a group of intentional Christian communities in the United States, England, and Australia, with around 2500 members living in nine communities. Theologically descended from the Anabaptist communal tradition, the Bruderhofs emphasize nonviolence and peace between peoples as well as a traditional family structure. Founded in 1920 by Eberhard Arnold, his family and some friends, the original Bruderhof community was a farm in Germany housing seven adult members. By 1926 the community had grown to more than 40 members and relocated, beginning a history of growth and movement.[43] The sociological underpinnings of the Bruderhof came out of the German youth movements of the 1910s, but more important were the theological influences of Arnold's radical Anabaptist-influenced Christianity. Arnold was already widely known as a theologian and evangelist by the time he and his wife Emmy fulfilled their dream of living according to Jesus' words of the Sermon on the Mount and in accordance with Acts 2:42-45 and 4:32: "Now the whole group of those who believed

[43] Yoder, John Howard, introduction to *God's Revolution: Justice, Community, and the Coming Kingdom.* Arnold, Eberhard. (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1997), xxix.

were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common."[44]

The community had moved to the Rhoen Mountains in 1926, and Arnold became interested in the Hutterite communities that had begun in the area in the 16th century during the Radical Reformation. He traveled to the United States and met the Hutterites, and was ordained as a Hutterite minister. This began the relationship of the Bruderhof to its Anabaptist spiritual ancestors. The first major struggle for the young community came in 1934 when they refused to fight for or declare allegiance to the Nazi government. A community was formed in Liechtenstein for service-age men and some others to protect them from Nazi demands.[45] After Arnold died in 1935, the communities moved to England instead of struggling against Nazi values and obstacles. By 1938 a second English community had developed, housing over 300 members.[46]

When Britain and Germany fought in World War II, the British government decided to remove these recent German immigrants to internment camps. In turn, the communities (now with English as well as German members) decided to leave England rather than be separated and imprisoned. The group immigrated to Paraguay, and in 1954 the first Bruderhof began in the United States. With well over 700 members worldwide, the Bruderhof communities were strong until 1961, when internal conflict caused a centralization of leadership and power in Woodcrest, New York.[47] Over 300 members

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[44] Baum, Markus. *Against the Wind: Eberhard Arnold and the Bruderhof.* Translated and edited by the Bruderhof Communities. (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1998), 125.
[45] Yoder, xxxi-xxxii
[46] Edwards, Matt. "Bruderhof." 1998. From the Religious Movements Homepage at the University of Virginia, accessed 18 April 2001, available at http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Bruderh.html. Internet.
[47] "Our History." From Bruderhof Community Website. Available online 04.18.01 at http://roots.bruderhof.com/history.htm. 2001.

left or were expelled, and whole communities shut down and moved to New York. Heinrich Arnold, son of Eberhard, emerged as the leader of the communities.[48]

The Bruderhof communities have generally had good relationships with their neighbors, with the notable exceptions of the Nazi and, for a short time, British governments. Their relationship with the Hutterites, however, has been more complex. The Bruderhofs were connected to the Hutterites after Arnold's 1935 visit, but the relationship since has been rocky. Bruderhof communities have been wary of accepting all Hutterian doctrine, and the Hutterian Brethren have expelled and readmitted Bruderhof members more than once. Individual Hutterite communities have embraced Bruderhof members, later to accuse them of domineering behaviors and errant beliefs. These situations led to the expulsion of Bruderhof members from Hutterite communities and affiliation in 1955, only to be reinstated in 1974.[49] The Hutterites excommunicated the Bruderhof communities again in 1990. Currently, the Bruderhof communities are not affiliated with Hutterite societies, though they do profess to share most beliefs with the Hutterites.[50]

The writings of Eberhard Arnold and his experience of the Bruderhof were grounded in his interpretation of Jesus' teachings for how people should live. An absolute dependence on God and faith that demanded complete submission to God's will became the foundation of Arnold's theology and his lived faith. Arnold drew his ideas of God's will for humans largely from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel. The Beatitudes, love for enemies as well as neighbors, turning the other cheek, not judging, adultering or profaning: all of these messages shaped Arnold's thought. Harmonious and

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[48] Edwards, pages not given
[49] Hostetler, John Andrew. *Hutterite Society*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 279-282
[50] Edwards, pages not given

interdependent relationships were a necessary corollary of Arnold's theology; for him the gospel had clear social implications including nonviolence and forgiveness.[51] Members of the Bruderhof have campaigned against Nazism, the Vietnam War, the death penalty, abortion, and euthanasia, and have protested for Civil Rights, among other things. The Bruderhofs are known particularly for fighting against the death penalty and their adamant support of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal in his quest for exoneration.[52]

The three Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience are interpreted and upheld by the Bruderhof communities—in fact, the second step in becoming a member, called the novitiate, is based on acceptance of the vows.[53] Community members live in community of material goods, supporting the community as a whole through community-owned businesses including a publishing company, furniture manufacturing, and dog breeding. The community meets often for meetings to socialize and make community and business decisions. [54] The main rule in the community, known as the "House Rule," calls for direct address in situations of conflict, prohibiting negative talk about others "in a spirit of irritation or vexation."[55] Marriage is also important to the community; the community strictly mandates fidelity and pre-marital "sexual purity.[56]

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[51] Arnold, Eberhard. *God's Revolution: Justice, Community, and the Coming Kingdom.* (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1997), 16-17.
[52] Tapia, Andres, "A Christian Community Makes Waves, Not War" *Christianity Today* 39 (Nov 13 1995), 74.
[53] "Membership." From Bruderhof Community Website. Available online 04.18.01 at http://beliefs.bruderhof.com/membership.htm. 2001.
[54] Tapia, Andres, "A Christian Community Makes Waves, Not War" *Christianity Today* 39 (13 Nov 1995): 74.
[55] Arnold, Eberhard. "House Rule on Gossip." 1925/2001. From Bruderhof Community Website. Available online 04.18.01 at http://beliefs.bruderhof.com/houserule.htm.
[56] "Marriage." From Bruderhof Community Website. Available online 04.18.01 at http://roots.bruderhof.com/marriage.htm. 2001.

Community interpretations of Jesus' teachings regarding marriage and sexuality form the basis of these rules, as they do all others.

The traditional, nuclear family is called the basic unit of their community. Parents are primarily responsible for raising their children, though all adult community members act as role models. The community educates children internally up to the eighth grade, followed by public high schools, and some children go on to more schooling. The community encourages young adults to leave for at least one year, experiencing life in the outside world, before deciding to become members, and they go through a membership process identical to that of any outsider. [57]

Outside opinions of the Bruderhof communities have varied widely. Many in mainstream media have lauded the Bruderhofs and their nonviolent, family-oriented ways as a viable counter cultural way of living. Others, especially ex-members, have been critical of the Bruderhofs, and some have called them authoritarian cults. James Rubin, a sociology professor who was denied permission to study the Bruderhofs, has since joined with the Peregrine Foundation, begun by disgruntled ex-Bruderhof members, to engage in polemical attacks against the Bruderhof. While almost no detractors disagree with the Bruderhof's avowed values of community, nonviolence, and faith in God, some have questioned the methods used by the community to live these values. A deeper discussion of accusations against the Bruderhofs, as well as what we might learn from these disputes, will come in the Conclusion.

Jesus People USA

Jesus People USA is an intentional Christian community based on radical counter cultural Christian discipleship and ministry to the needy in urban Chicago. The

[57] Edwards, pages not given

community grew out of the "Jesus People" movement of the late 1960s, where hippies and counter cultural values aligned with radical Christian values to create a wave of Christians steeped in counterculture. In its early days, the group had no intention of becoming an intentional Christian community.[58] A group called Jesus People Milwaukee formed in 1971, and reached nearly 200 members before splintering by 1972 to travel and evangelize. A group of itinerant urban missionaries in the guise of a rock band called itself Jesus People USA and traveled to Florida in a bus. The group revolved around Resurrection, a Christian rock band. The group performed and evangelized in churches, colleges, and in the streets, attracting a few "members" of the counterculture: runaways, drug addicts, and other outcasts. The group was discouraged with the little response it received overall, and returned to Duluth, Minnesota for a short time before settling in Chicago in 1972.[59]

Chicago provided the group with ample opportunities for evangelism as well as a measure of stability not possible for a group traveling in a bus. The early leadership of the group struggled to find its identity, and relationships with other organizations were established and broken as the group tried to define itself. By 1975 JPUSA found a permanent residence, housing single men and women dorm-style as the community grew. The mid-seventies also saw the beginnings of the first JPUSA businesses, including Cornerstone Magazine, a publication that has continued, although not always regularly, throughout JPUSA's history. In 1978 the group moved to a low-income neighborhood

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[58] "Who Are We? Meet Our Family." From Jesus People USA website. Available online 04.20.01 at http://www.jpusa.org/jpusa/meet.htm. 1999. Scholarly sources on JPUSA are scant, and most of the Internet sources I use here are from the community's website.

[59] Prorock, Lindsay. "Jesus People USA." 1999. (From the Religious Movements Homepage, University of Virginia. Available online 04.20.01 at http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu//nrms/jpusa.html.) This source appears to come from a student project for a series of classes on religious movements.

and became more involved in social justice ministries. In 1984 the group held its first Cornerstone Festival, an outreach opportunity and forum for its still-thriving Christian rock flavor. The festival was very successful and became an annual event. In the later 1980s JPUSA multiplied its services to the homeless and other low-income groups, and opened a pro-life agency.[60] In 1989 the community joined the Evangelical Covenant Church based in Chicago. This greater partnership has allowed JPUSA to grow and has offered new possibilities for outreach, leadership, and financial security.

Today the community numbers 450-500, all living at one address. The community has undergone numerous changes over the years, and many members have come and gone since the early days. Outreach is still important at JPUSA. The community operates an emergency shelter for women and children, a housing program for low-income seniors, a wide-ranging program for neighborhood youth, an international craft-based fundraising project, and other programs. Community-owned businesses, including a roofing company, cabinet-making shop, and Christian music recording studio, are still the major source of funds for the community. The community has embraced new technological innovations, featuring a comprehensive website.[61]

The goal of JPUSA members is to dedicate their entire lives to Christ, and they believe that this task is best accomplished in community. The centeredness provided by life in community gives JPUSA members the resources to serve others and opportunities for ministry that would not exist outside the community.[62] Community was not the

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[60] Bozeman, John. *Jesus People USA: An Examination of an Urban Communitarian Religious Group.* (Masters Thesis, Florida State University, 1990. Accessed 20 April 2001, available at http://wsrv.clas.virginia.edu/~jmb5b/jp.html#ch5. Internet.): 58.

[61] "Who Are We? Meet Our Family."

[62] Jones, Timothy. "Jesus' People: Lessons for Living in the 'We' Decade." *Christianity Today.* 36 (14 September 1992): 20-25.

original goal of these people, but they felt called to serve Christ by ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of inner-city people, and community life facilitates their mission very well. JPUSA members do not believe that their version of community life is the only valid one, or that would work for everyone, but they do find that their communal life and service to neighbors shape each other well.[63]

According to the JPUSA Covenant, members must agree to the JPUSA Statement of Faith, which states such common fundamentalist Christian beliefs as biblical inerrancy, affirmation of the Trinity, full immersion adult baptism, God's grace given through faith in Christ as the way to eternal life, and all Christians as the Body of Christ.[64] People whose doctrine differentiates from the JPUSA Statement of Faith are not welcome into the community.[65] Thus every JPUSA member professes the same set of beliefs because, as the covenant says, "when people live as closely as we do, doctrinal contention over significant points of faith within our membership can cause discord and strife with no real purpose."[66] Community leaders feel that too much variation in fundamental beliefs could threaten the community and its ministry, both of which are based on those beliefs.[67]

The media has always covered JPUSA because of its outreach and community involvement. *Christianity Today* has always supported JPUSA, writing a number of positive articles about it over the past ten years. Many feel that the community has adapted well to changing situations and reacted to needs of the community and its

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[63] Jones, 22
[64] "Our Statement of Faith." From Jesus People USA Website. Available online 04.20.01 at http://www.jpusa.org/jpusa/documents/faith.htm.
[65] "The JPUSA Covenant." *Cornerstone Magazine*, Volume 22, Issue 102/103, 1994, 20.
[66] "The JPUSA Covenant," 20
[67] "The JPUSA Covenant," 21

neighbors. John Bozeman wrote his Master's Thesis at Florida State University on JPUSA in 1990, and his appraisal of JPUSA and its future was quite positive.[68] Much of the media coverage has been positive, but in recent years the conflicts and controversies of the community have received considerable attention. More on recent JPUSA conflicts as well as what we can learn from JPUSA will be found in the Conclusion.

Koinonia

Koinonia Partners is a former intentional Christian community dedicated to Christian discipleship, community values, social justice, and racial integration. In 1942, Clarence Jordan and his wife Florence, along with Martin and Mabel England, moved with their families to an old farm in Sumter County in Southwest Georgia to begin a small religious community. Supporting themselves with agriculture and attempting to live out Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, these devout Southern Baptists started an intentional Christian community.[69] The community has redefined itself and its mission numerous times in the past 60 years, but Koinonia Farm, known since 1969 as Koinonia Partners, grew to become a symbol of interracialism and Christian community, and continues to find a place among Christian social justice organizations.

Clarence Jordan was the clearly the young community's visionary, calling for Koinonia to stand as a "demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God."[70] The community was shaped mostly by Jordan's sense of his call to serve Christ. He wanted to live out his Christian faith in a very practical way, by working to improve race relations and the

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[68] Bozeman, 106.
[69] Coble, Ann. "Cotton Patch Justice, Cotton Patch Peace." *Prism*, (September/October 1998). Available online 04.28.01 at http://206.204.240.14/prism/archive/1998/septoct98/cotton.html. Pages not given.
[70] McMullen, Cary. "Koinonia's Search for Community." *The Christian Century*, v.117, 7, (March 1 2000) 239.

economic conditions of rural blacks in Georgia.[71] Jordan also felt that life in community would be the best way to ensure a mission centered on Christ, and he knew that blacks and whites living together in community was the most important opportunity to foster racial harmony. By pooling material resources, practicing common worship, and working, side by side, Jordan hoped to show that blacks and whites could live together peacefully. He further hoped to show that Christians are called to live such radical reconciliation in their everyday lives.[72] Jordan's views grew out of his knowledge of the Social Gospel movement seen through his Southern Baptist upbringing and lived in the context of racial segregation.[73]

Koinonia Farm began simply, as a communal living experiment by white Southern Baptist Christians committed to loving outsiders as Jesus had taught. In Georgia in 1942, blacks were clearly the outsiders. The community hoped to achieve some measure of racial fellowship as well as to help local farmers improve their economic situations. Racial fellowship began in the form of Bible studies, literacy classes, and the teaching of modern farming techniques to poor area residents, black and white. The community also reached out to local black churches, hoping to build spiritual fellowship.[74] The community grew and lived in relative peace until the 1950s, when segregation was legally threatened. Then the local Ku Klux Klan came out against Koinonia, shooting and bombing and organizing an economic boycott of the community's agricultural produce. This overt hostility lasted well over a decade,

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[71] K'Meyer, Tracy Elaine. *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: the Story of Koinonia Farm.* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 37.
[72] K'Meyer, 38
[73] K'meyer, 18
[74] Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. "Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South." (Review) *Southern Cultures*, 5, 1, (Spring 1999), 75

attracting national media attention. A mail-order farm produce business began to offset the local boycott, and Civil Rights advocates donated much-needed funds to Koinonia.[75] As the Civil Rights movement began, Koinonia stood as a beacon of hope, a witness to the possibility of races living and working side by side.[76]

Of course, almost nothing the community did came without intense struggle and difficulty. Besides the overt attacks, financial struggles and basic issues of the community's vision of itself have always plagued Koinonia. When the community became known as an outpost for the Civil Rights movement, some members wanted focused on racial integration and wanted to join protests and demonstrations. Clarence Jordan did not approve of such actions, which he viewed as meant to cause conflict and not reconciliation.[77] The activism that grew naturally out of the community's perceived place in the Civil Rights movement conflicted with the goals of Christian community. The community actually splintered over the issue, and in 1957 some members who were tired of the violence and constant threat to Koinonia moved to Hidden Springs, New Jersey, where they could live in community in peace. This community also sent funds back to Georgia to alleviate financial stress caused by the local boycott[78]

Koinonia relied heavily on outside contributions, making the community particularly susceptible to outside influences. On one hand were the Civil Rights supporters who saw Koinonia as an outpost for integration. On the other hand were communalist Christian groups such as the Bruderhof, Hutterites, Quakers, and Mennonites, who encouraged Koinonia to remain in Christian community and sacrifice

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[75] Coble, pages not given
[76] Brundage, 75
[77] Redekop, 207
[78] K'Meyer, 114

some of their racial witness in order to keep the community together.[79] In 1962 the community changed its economic structure, placing each family in charge of one business venture, such as the farm, the mail-order business, and others. This changed the fundamental community of goods to a situation they felt was more viable. Spiritual community and racial witness were still solid goals, but economic threat forced material community out of Koinonia's future. This also relieved some of the tensions that had built up during the community's struggle with local racist businesses.[80]

When segregation did fall, the community shifted its focus to helping the financially struggling blacks in the area, changing its name to Koinonia Partners and beginning a number of cooperative business ventures designed to assist area residents. The farm was not producing income the way it had been, and outside support was down. Millard Fuller, a wealthy businessman and community member, started a project to build homes for poor local residents, which became Habitat for Humanity International, today one of the most successful nonprofit organizations in the world.[81] Clarence Jordan died in 1969, having survived into some victory of Civil Rights movement and having helped Fuller plan for the first houses that would become the model for Habitat.[82] Koinonia residents formed another intentional Christian community, called Jubilee Partners, in northern Georgia in 1979.

Koinonia has always struggled, and has barely survived some of these challenges. Koinonia never lived up to its vision of interracial community. Clarence Jordan's

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[79] K'Meyer, 138-139.
[80] K'Meyer, 141
[81] Redekop, Calvin. "Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of Koinonia Farm."(Review) *Utopian Studies* (Spring 1998), 207.
[82] "The History of Habitat." 2000. From Habitat for Humanity International Website. Available online 04.28.01 at http://www.habitat.org/how/historytext.html

sensitivity to racial problems clashed with his unyielding sense of the integrity necessary for Christian discipleship. The community itself was made up of "partners," who lived in community of material goods, and employees, who lived nearby and worked on the farm but did not commit to community life. The partners were almost all liberal-thinking white imports to the area, and the employees were the poor black folks who had always lived there. The white partners made all the community decisions, and the black employees had little say in community matters.[83] As the community was pulled between the goals of interracialism and intentional Christian community, it never truly found a home in either area. The blacks and whites were always separated, black working for white, whites often committed to national issues and movements, blacks working toward leaving poverty and oppression in their everyday lives.[84] Ultimately Koinonia's vision of a "demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God,"[85] including a racially integrated community of material and spiritual goods and providing outreach and economic assistance to neighboring poor, was too diffuse and had no foundation. Each element—racial integration, Christian discipleship, and community living—vied for central importance at Koinonia, and in the end, none was completely achieved. More on Koinonia will be found in the Conclusion.

In what ways can these communities be considered vital today? Next comes a critical analysis of how relationships within communities can foster vitality in intentional Christian communities. The success of these inter-community relationships is the most direct rebuttal to the individualism of our culture.

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[83] McMullen, 241
[84] McMullen, 240-241
[85] McMullen, 239

Healthy Relationships Within Intentional Christian Communities

Life in intentional community is hard. Each day, members of the community face conflicts of personality and ideals in the same group of people. Personality conflicts do not dry up due to common commitment. The irritations of living with others can multiply when the physical and human environment is constant. Still, people do stay in community, not out of fear or complacency, but because they are committed to something greater than themselves. What agreements must a community make in order to become a successful, vital community capable of living up to its goals? Healthy relationships in community rely on the goodwill and flexibility of individual members, but what guides their actions? Basic guidelines for a community are necessary, and clear expectations must be set. Communication is vitally important in an intentional Christian community. The healthy relationships inside a vital Christian community exist in a wholly different framework than those based on the individualism of Western society, and as such can serve as models of alternatives to the ethic of individualism.

Toward Healthy Relations: The Three Evangelical Counsels

Groups develop mechanisms to cope with interpersonal conflict. Members agree to the rules of any voluntary group. What systems of rules have intentional Christian communities used? In traditional monastic communities, the three Evangelical Counsels—poverty, chastity, and obedience—have been the foundation of community guidelines for centuries. All communities face similar interpersonal struggles, and all intentional Christian communities today have rules that in some ways parallel poverty, chastity, and obedience. Interpreted, these three guidelines can provide a useful lens for framing healthy relationships in intentional Christian communities.

Deborah Cerullo, a Roman Catholic sister who endured the struggle and growth of Vatican II, has interpreted the three Evangelical counsels for non-community members. For Cerullo, the Counsels emphasize core Christian values. Poverty, chastity, and obedience demonstrate "dependence on God, love for all God's people, and attentive listening to God's desires for us,"[86] respectively. Poverty's value lies in requiring dependence on God to provide and not relying solely on the ingenuity and economic worth of the community itself. Chastity is meant to allow religious to share love with all people on a somewhat equitable basis. Obedience is to God, trusting that the rules of an intentional Christian community will help foster hearing of God's desires for individuals.[87]

The purpose of the three Evangelical Counsels is to help people live in community with each other. A common misconception is that monastics think God prefers these ways of living. In reality the counsels are reasonable responses to the practical problems of community life, as tested over time. Everyone in community must make sacrifices toward the common goal, and the Counsels exist because Christian monastic leaders found that life in community would falter without some basic agreements between members. Religious—monks, nuns, sisters, and brothers—could not devote themselves to God in community if they were allowed to pair off in romantic relations; celibacy provides guidelines to limit some relationships that could disrupt community. Agreement as to rules and authority is necessary, and the explicit obedience of monasticism provides a clear set of expectations for members to follow. Poverty of

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[86] Cerullo, Deborah M. "The Virtues of the Vows." *America*, v.183, 10,(7 October 2000), 6
[87] Cerullo, 6

material and spiritual goods allows members to rely on one another and on God. The goal of the Counsels is to enable members to live together for Christ.[88]

Poverty—Community of Goods

According to Rosabeth Moss Kanter, community of material goods, communal labor, and regular group contact are necessary to ensure a sense of communion between community members.[89] In communal labor, each community member should do work according to her or his abilities and talents, but should not work solely in highly specialized areas.[90] Investment of resources, energy, time, and money involves individual members in the success or failure of the community. Communities feel that pooled resources, infused with faith in God, will suffice to meet the needs of the entire community. To live in community is to live by one's own labor and also by relying on the labor of one's neighbor; interdependence feeds commitment to a greater good.

Intentional Christian communities often draw a distinction between material and spiritual goods. In a community of material goods, food, tools, and CD players are not owned by any one person but are the property of the entire community, to be distributed as needed. Community of spiritual goods refers to shared spiritual life. When a community member has spiritual or emotional difficulties he or she may be buoyed by the spiritual strength and common purpose of the larger community.

Distribution of material goods in intentional Christian community is often based on a system of relative need instead of absolute equality. In Benedictine communities, the

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[88] This section was informed by my experiences in a class on monasticism taught by Jenifer Ward, at the Augustinerkloster in Erfurt, Germany as part of the Term in Germany program offered by Gustavus Adolphus College and St. Olaf College. While this is not a citation per se, my knowledge of this information is based partially on that experience.

[89] Kanter, 91

[90] Kanter, 96-97

sick receive more than the healthy, and members come to terms with their differing levels of need.[91] Unlike so much of mainstream society, material wealth is not the goal of intentional Christian community life. The very reason for community of goods is that envy should not divide the community; possessions should not be the focus of one's life. This is not to imply that otherworldly spirituality is the focus of Christian community, as the duality is often set up, but simply that people's desires impede healthy community living.

Shared meals are also important in community life, serving as a simple, tangible, reminder of the basic nature of community life. Many resources about community speak of the importance of shared meals as a time when individuals come together and enjoy thanks and fellowship. Kathleen Norris, from her extended experiences in visiting Benedictine communities, notes the importance of shared meals within a community.[92] Meals can be a time when relationships are made whole again, when a person re-centers into the necessities of life. A number of the respondents to the FIC survey of intentional communities' self-definitions included shared meals as a basic component of community.[93]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer shares the insight that in community life, Christians must be thankful for the opportunity to live together.[94] Community members should focus on thankfulness for necessities and the gifts afforded them instead of dwelling on uncontrollable issues. Intentional Christian community members are thankful for what they receive, knowing that their personal efforts do not translate directly to material

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[91] Stewart, 93
[92] "What I took home from the cloister." (Interview with Kathleen Norris) *U.S. Catholic*, v62, n10, (Oct 1997), 8.
[93] Questenberry; see above note on FIC
[94] Bonhoeffer, 28

rewards. In acknowledging the roles of God and their neighbors in their daily providence, community members are constantly reminded of the need to build healthy relationships of mutual respect and service with others. Acknowledgement of one's needs and gratitude for gifts beget a sense of reciprocation that translates to serving and loving others.

Prayer life is important for developing community of spiritual goods. All intentional Christian communities have some form of community worship. JPUSA offers a contemporary service on Sundays for the community as well as for visitors.[95] Bruderhof communities have regular meetings for family and community worship and prayer.[96] At Taizé, prayer three times daily is meant to center one's day, and prayer services have no official closing, implying that the day's work is a continuation of prayer. Hicks suggests that this formulation of work as a form of prayer crumbles the false dichotomy between prayer life and outward life.[97] The sense of spirituality infusing daily life with vitality is common in traditional monastic thought, and community of spiritual goods is meant to work in concert with community of material goods to allow for greater trust within a community.

Obedience—Structure and Acceptance of Authority

Clear expectations and guidelines are necessary for the stability of any group of people. Pachomius, the Egyptian monk considered to be the founder of cenobitic life, believed at first that the only function of a superior should be as a model of humility and service. He believed that his humility would invite imitation by all and that no further measures ensuring obedience should be necessary. His colleagues took advantage of this perceived reluctance to stand as an authority figure, whereupon Pachomius learned that

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[95] Jones, 24
[96] Edwards, pages not given
[97] Hicks, 212-213

clear expectations regarding authority are key to a community's health.[98] In a Benedictine monastery, the superior is important both as an authority figure and as a model for others. Benedict's superior is chosen by the community and officially represents Christ in the monastery.[99] The superior "must be virtuous, sober, and merciful, and always hold mercy before justice," and most importantly, "should show discretion and moderation."[100] The two guiding principles of the superior are to teach by example the ways of Christ and of the *Rule*, and to treat members uniformly and justly.[101] A humble servant to all, the superior still must be willing and able to wield authority, based on a clear system of rules and expectations.

Taizé's language for obedience, acceptance of authority, can be helpful when talking about the structure of intentional Christian communities today. According to the *Rule of Taizé*, "The Prior focuses the unity of the community,"[102] meaning that his goal is to act as an agent for the community and to act on the behalf of the community. The Prior is not to make decisions on his own will, but neither is he bound to a simple majority in making decisions; openness and a spirit of faithful goodwill are necessary attributes of the Prior in making decisions.[103]

Jesus People USA members agree to the JPUSA Covenant, which outlines both spiritual and behavioral parameters for community. A council of Elders oversees JPUSA because the community fears the possibility of concentrating too much power in the hands of one person. [104] The Bruderhof communities also operate on a system of elders,

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[98] Stewart, 78
[99] Stewart, 82
[100] Stewart, 100
[101] Benedict, 48
[102] *Rule of Taizé*, 95
[103] Roger, *Rule of Taizé*, 95-97
[104] "JPUSA Covenant." *Cornerstone Magazine*, v.22, n.02/103 (1994): 19.

although Eberhard Arnold, his son Heinrich, and grandson Johann Christoph have functioned as de facto leaders of the community.[105] Democracy does not seem common among intentional Christian communities. Benedictines do elect their superiors. In my conversations with Benedictines most have said that the community knows who should lead and that elections are seldom strongly contested, especially in smaller communities. It is possible to theorize that life in intentional Christian community is so intense that leadership happens somewhat organically. Through constant, close interaction communities could reach consensus on leadership. Community members agree to accept the authority of leaders and rules because they trust that this acceptance will facilitate movement toward the goals of the community.

In the *Rule of St. Benedict*, balance was the goal of every command. Monastics remained obedient because they knew they could trust the community to provide for them. In his time Benedict offered a reasonable and easygoing *Rule* providing enough to eat and drink, enough sleep, and a superior who stressed care of individuals over absolutist directives. *Discretio*,[106] a Latin word meaning both moderation and discretion, was to Benedict "the mother of all virtues."[107] Moderation is not to go to extremes, to take a balanced approach to each situation. Discretion refers to thoughtful consideration of individual situations such that one reaches fair, responsible decisions. The prolonged success of Benedict's Rule is often attributed to his constant and clear predilection for these two characteristics.[108] Communities can cultivate healthy relationships through

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[105] Tapia, 74
[106] Stewart, 83
[107] Benedict, 100
[108] Discretion and moderation are mentioned in many references to Benedict and the success of his Rule, including Stewart, 83.

balance, discretion, and moderation; this bit of wisdom can be applied to interpersonal situations outside of communities as well.

Chastity—Living for God and Neighbor

Chastity does not exist because God dislikes sex or prefers single people. While bride-of-Christ imagery is quite common in monastic groups, the notion of Christian community members living solely for Christ through a marriage metaphor is not the sole archetype of intentional Christian community. Development of close relationships can lead to factions, a constant challenge to community. In her studies of nineteenth century utopian communities, Kanter found that limiting coupling within the community was more successful than allowing community members to pair off as they wished.[109] Celibacy[110] is meant to limit splintering of a group by focusing love toward community members somewhat equally. When a member's emotional energy is directed toward one other individual, the stability of the group is threatened because, in theory, as little as possible should belong solely to one member of the group. The love and emotional energy of a community member are the substance of serious commitment, and monastics feel that commitment should be directed toward the community itself and not toward an individual therein. [111]

Traditionally, celibacy is meant as an asceticism, limiting human desires that could cause problems in such close quarters. In Carole Garibaldi Rogers' interviews with Catholic religious women since Vatican II, some mention celibacy as a challenge, while

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[109] Kanter, 86

[110] Traditionally, chastity is the title given to the Evangelical Counsel, but celibacy is another common term for the same phenomenon. I will use celibacy more often because though both are defined as "abstention from sexual intercourse" in the Merriam-Webster Online Collegiate Dictionary, celibacy has the added certainty of meaning that one is not married. Chastity can refer to fidelity in relationships as well.

[111] Kanter, 88-89

others note its positive effects. Catherine Bertrand, SSND,[112] acknowledges the constant challenge of celibacy, but has always seen celibacy as a way to love others instead of focusing that love on a single other person.[113] Mary Jo Leddy, who in 1994 left religious life, notes that celibacy makes more sense in her new life than ever before. She lives and works in a house for international refugees, and Leddy's celibacy in the midst of the ever-changing community's struggles allows her to focus on the community's problems and on loving members equally.[114] These are modern ways of seeing celibacy not as asceticism or as a morally better way of living, but as a way to direct love and energy toward care and service of others.

According to Benedictines, celibacy has tangible benefits in personal relationships with others. The goal of celibacy is to be able to truly receive every person as if she or he were Christ. Some say that to focus too much of one's attention on a single person is to lose the possibility of true hospitality.[115] Traditional Catholic religious often assert that celibacy begets hospitality, as sexual energy is transformed and consequently shared with all in the form of hospitality. Kathleen Norris is one writer who names Benedictine hospitality as deriving from celibacy.[116]

Celibacy does not turn into hospitality of its own accord. Kathleen Norris tells the importance of being open to love and desire even in the midst of sexual abstinence.[117] The theory is that the stereotypical rigid nuns hitting wayward children have repressed their sexuality to the point that they can no longer have authentic, healthy relationships

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[112] School Sisters of Notre Dame
[113] Rogers, 272
[114] Rogers, Carole Garibaldi. *Poverty, Chastity, and Change*. (New York: Twayne, 1996), 284.
[115] Ward, Jenifer. Lecture notes on celibacy from May 22, 2000 at the Augustinerkloster in Erfurt, Germany as part of the Term in Germany program offered by Gustavus Adolphus College and St. Olaf College.
[116] Norris, 9
[117] Norris, 10

with anyone. Their desire has turned to bitterness due to misguided celibacy. Celibacy, in its most positive light, is about being present constantly to one's feelings, being open to love and yet redirecting those feelings from one other to many others. According to one Benedictine, celibacy is a constant struggle when lived correctly, a constant process of converting sexual and romantic feelings into generosity, hospitality, and openness to truly see all others as Christ.[118] Celibacy is not meant to preclude loving relationships, but to direct love at others more equitably than marriage, family life and sexual relations allow.

Certainly not all intentional Christian communities solve the problem of limiting interpersonal strife through sexual abstinence. Taizé is the only one of our four communities that does not encourage traditional family and romantic relationships. The Bruderhof communities explicitly state that "the family is the basic unit"[119] of their communities, and marriage and children are highly valued. Jesus People USA and Koinonia also operate with traditional family structures; Koinonia even assigned specific economic responsibilities to individual families.[120] JPUSA and the Bruderhof communities each have strict rules forbidding extramarital sexual relations, and Koinonia very likely had similar rules when the organization functioned as an intentional Christian community. Interpersonal struggles will occur in any community, and celibacy and marital fidelity are rules designed to limit some potential interpersonal struggles.

Some recently developed intentional Christian communities, such as the Jesusbruderschaft (Jesus Brotherhood) in Germany, consist of single men, single women, and married couples with families. The singles remain celibate, and the community does

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[118] Ward notes. On 5.22.2000, the class interviewed a sister of the Communität Castellar Ring, our hosts in the Augustinerkloster. CCR is an order of Protestant Benedictine sisters in Germany.
[119] "Family Life." From Bruderhof Community Website. Available online 04.18.01 at http://roots.bruderhof.com/familylife.htm. 2001.
[120] K'Meyer, 141

not normally allow them to marry. This approach functions very similarly to the Bruderhof and other traditional models, with the exception that single members must remain so. The Jesusbruderschaft thus blends Anabaptist-style family living with a Catholic monastic style, a new approach. While this would not work for all communities, and certainly provides its own unique challenges, it is an interesting model for drawing boundaries in personal relations in community.[121]

Communication

Clear expectations and guidelines pave the way for less squabbling and wasted energy in a community. Everyone agrees to certain rules, but community members can easily forget the rules or interpret them to meet their own needs. The easiest way to avoid such situations in community life is through consistent, honest communication. Any community is a dynamic entity, and group members must check in regularly with one another and be aware of expectations the group places on them. For these conditions to occur, members must feel accepted in the group, feel safe in sharing their concerns, and must trust that the group itself is worth their efforts to change and improve it.[122] Healthy personal relationships bolstered by steady, open communication pave the way toward any group's goals.

Hammett and Sofield focus on psychologically proven methods for improving group communication. They offer dialogue as one model of open group communication that can help diffuse interpersonal struggles and larger group issues before they cause serious damage to community. Dialogue includes self-disclosure and feedback, people

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[121] In May 2000 I visited Kloster Volkenroda in the village of Volkenroda, Germany, home to a small community of the Jesusbruderschaft. There my travel group talked with some members of the community and learned something of their story. Their story is a fascinating one, but extends beyond the boundaries of this thesis.

[122] Hammett and Sofield, 39

sharing information about themselves and reactions to this shared information.[123] Dialogue is not easy. It presupposes some level of trust, support, and cooperative intentions between community members. Only then can it fulfill its goal of encouraging individual growth and thereby the growth of relationships within the community and the community itself. Openness to the different realities of others is key to this process. Why all this dialogue and open communication? Members of a community must build personal relationships with others, accepting the responsibility of mutually sharing with and supporting others.[124] Open communication and explicit sharing of expectations lead to community less weighed down with misunderstandings and bickering, and so directing energy toward community goals.

Conclusions

In intentional Christian community, relationships inside the community must achieve some level of stability and must engender trust between members, and the members must trust the community itself. Clear rules and expectations are necessary, and members must relinquish some freedoms and accept the authority of the community. In sharing goods and spirituality, members gain trust in God, the community, and each other. Maintaining celibacy or marital fidelity encourages stability in community dynamics and can help community members share love more equitably with others. Open and honest communication is necessary for a community to remain clear about its expectations and stay true to its goals, as well as maintaining healthy relationships within the community.

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[123] Hammett and Sofield, 84
[124] Hammett and Sofield, 81

Everyone struggles with these issues of interpersonal relationships, but the constant proximity of community members can act as a crucible, testing the limits of interpersonal communications and boundaries. Community members must be constantly aware of interpersonal dynamics. People outside community seldom face the intensity confronting intentional Christian community members, but can learn from the clarity of boundaries drawn with respect to communication and relationships. Recognition of interrelatedness, acceptance of authority, clear relationship boundaries, and communication are skills everyone can use, and are indispensable in intentional Christian community.

Relationships Between Intentional Christian Communities and the Outside World

The relationship between an intentional Christian community and the world around it is always delicate. The previous discussion of building and sustaining relationships holds between community members and outsiders as well. Openness and honesty in communication are necessary for any relationship to grow. Just as important for an intentional Christian community, however, is openness to change. How does this openness manifest itself? What forms of relationship and expressions of openness show that the community is vital and true to its vision of itself? The traditional contemplative stereotype of monastic communities is not helpful anymore. Rosabeth Moss Kanter examines a similar way of avoiding the world when she examines nineteenth-century utopian communities. Another relevant issue is how communities relate to the "universal Church." Should a community call itself a movement? How can ecumenism play out in communities?

Vital Intentional Christian Communities: Dynamic and Open to Change

Even the most basic assumptions of communities are challenged by the radically different values of outside society; what characteristics must a community possess to respond to these challenges? An intentional Christian community must be dynamic, facing the myriad challenges of its existence with innovative and daring solutions. A vital community must be open to adapting its methods, and perhaps even its basic values. Flimsiness of values, goals, or structural methods is not helpful for a community, but in order to respond to challenges a community must be in constant conversation with the world around it. Sometimes a community must draw on that world for new methods or ideas, should not wholly embrace every nifty new thing. An intentional Christian community must remain open but not leave itself too vulnerable to outside influence.

Steadfastness may no longer be an admirable trait in intentional Christian communities, as today it often aligns itself with clinging to the past and struggling against natural change. Only through openness and honest dialogue between fading certainties and new realities can any religious community survive and thrive in these times. Intentional Christian communities can learn from the experience of traditional Catholic monastic communities in all their recent turmoil. Joan Chittister's ideas about facing challenge with openness certainly foster vital community. Her method for dealing with community struggles centers on a "spirituality of creation," a time when asking difficult questions and not fearing the answers is a signal of faith in God.[125] Chittister chides her fellow religious, saying, "Resignation now reigns where recklessness should be."[126] Change does not necessarily threaten a healthy community or its members. When

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[125] Chittister, 42
[126] Chittister, 38

individual members do not trust in the goals and values of a community, commitment can recede, leading ultimately to a loss of a community's sense of purpose.

Chittister reminds us that the foundations of Christian community speak to the necessity of openness to change. "Scripture defines a clear model of service and change, of change and new service where commitment alone bridges the gap between old certainties and new challenge."[127] She describes contemporary religious life as wild and unclear, making new demands on its members. Chittister sees that contemporary life in intentional Christian community must have meaning beyond the traditional structures of Church and order; community members cannot live only for themselves, cloistered and apart, but must share their insights with the world.[128] All intentional Christian communities deal with revision; it is more helpful to work with change toward improvement than to work against change, often causing alienation and stagnation.

Stereotypes Obstructing Openness

Christian communities are commonly stereotyped as turning away from the outside world in favor of exclusive or secretive beliefs or practices. In traditional monastic communities, the stereotype is often that monastics are strictly contemplative beings with little care for the world around them. Family-based Christian communities face the stereotype that they are cults whose Christian language hides "secretive" or "strange" practices. In either case, the community is focused inward and wants as little contact as possible with the outside world. These stereotypes often go on to say that community members think themselves superior to outsiders, or that community members believe themselves to be the only true Christian disciples. Straightforwardness in

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[127] Chittister, 42
[128] Chittister, 43

communication is the greatest tool against stereotypes. Education of outsiders is the first step in demonstrating that communities are not cults or that monastics do care about the world. A vital intentional Christian community today must communicate with outsiders so its ideals and practices are not misinterpreted.

Contemplative Stereotypes

Some writers today lament the loss of the "contemplative life," referring to traditional monastic practices that focus on separation of monastics from the world. "The world" is perceived as unholy, materialistic, and lacking the sacredness of the pure, holy contemplative life. Current writers describe monastics as "single-mindedly seeking sanctity," [129] and pursuing "heroic holiness,"[130] contrasting monastic life with worldliness. One goes so far as to say that "monastic life is pretty useless in terms of productivity."[131] Another writer makes a culturally common generalization when he says that traditional monastics "confess to making no investments in the fate of the present or current world."[132] Mysticism and monasticism have a storied history together, and some see monastic life as being necessarily involved with the mystical goal of personal union with the divine.[133]

These stereotypes are problematic for the future of monasticism and intentional Christian community in general. If these community members do not care about anything outside their community, why should anyone care about them? If the fate of the world is irrelevant to their "higher spiritual pursuits," are these communities therefore irrelevant to

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[129] "Contemplative Life Still Stands a Chance." Unsigned editorial. *National Catholic Reporter*, v34, n8, (19 December 1997), 28
[130] "Contemplative Life Still Stands a Chance."
[131] Norris, 9
[132] Capps, 9.
[133] Capps, 9

the world? If life in intentional Christian community is truly so out of touch with the rest of society, how can any dialogue exist between the two, and how can intentional Christian community provide relevant, viable models for informing society of alternative ways of thinking or acting?

Many of the traditional monastics cited in this paper share opinions that directly refute the correlation between monasticism and wholly contemplative life. Based on her post-Vatican II experiences as a religious sister, Joan Chittister asserts that recklessness and risk are preferable to safety and holding back. She believes that hiding from the challenges presented by the outside world serves only to invite and prolong the death of community.[134] Deborah Cerullo is a Roman Catholic sister of the post-Vatican II era, and as part of this she feels called to be "engaged quite actively in the world rather than apart from it."[135] Carole Garibaldi Rogers interviewed a number of post-Vatican II Catholic sisters, and many said their communities had shifted their focus from inter-community issues to the issues facing a greater world. Many Benedictine monasteries have oblate programs, where anyone can choose to use the *Rule* to guide life outside the monastery.[136] Columba Stewart concedes that Benedictines are not always as involved in social justice or other causes as much as they could be, but he also says a contemplative focus on the otherworldly "can be used as a theological veneer for the terrible vice of monastic complacency."[137] This complacency, or closing oneself to new influences, is the antithesis of the vitality necessary for intentional Christian communities today.

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[134] Chittister, 38
[135] Cerullo, 6
[136] Stewart, 116
[137] Stewart, 121

Taizé both exemplifies the stereotypical contemplative ideal and challenges it. While the style of prayer services is quiet and contemplative, these services are attended at Taizé by thousands of young people at a time. While the Brothers live in a rural, remote part of France, they host thousands each week and live on missions around the world. Some still see the world of monasticism as wholly contemplative, centered on otherworldly pursuits and world denial for the sake of learning about some more ultimate truth.[138] In contrast to this, the *Rule of Taizé* clearly directs Brothers to "Open yourself to all that is human and you will see any vain desire to free from the world vanish from your heart. Be present to the time in which you live; adapt yourself to the conditions of the moment."[139] Taizé is quite explicit about its vision of service as a form of prayer. While Taizé's prayer life is remarkable, the community's vision of reconciliation is lived in its connections with young people around the world. Taizé's vitality centers on living, working, and praying with others and thereby sharing their sorrows and joys. This openness provides countless opportunities for the community to show others the value of community and relationships.

Utopian Community Stereotypes

Rosabeth Moss Kanter studied nineteenth century utopian communities to learn about creating commitment in community. Kanter describes the six processes that produce commitment as sacrifice, investment, renunciation, communion, mortification, and transcendence. Kanter found that these six factors build commitment and shape community life.[140] In the utopian communities of Kanter's study, these factors built commitment toward the community often by limiting outside relationships and by

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[138] Capps, 14
[139] *Rule of Taizé*, 7
[140] Smith, 160

discouraging trust of outsiders. By definition, utopias try to exclude outside influences, and the perfection sought in utopian communities has proven time and again to be unattainable. While Kanter certainly provides insights into the process of building community, the processes described by Kanter can serve to delude community members. Building a social utopia is not a viable goal for an intentional Christian community, and processes geared toward utopian commitment often do not promote healthy relationships between communities and outsiders.

Few Christian communities see themselves as utopian experiments, and vital intentional Christian communities certainly should not. Kanter describes communities that limited relationships outsiders in order to foster commitment solely to the community. Contact with the outside world could hurt an exclusivist utopian community by infusing it with ideals and values contrary to established community values.[141] Charismatic leadership, mystery, and strict behavioral guidance, are ways to produce transcendence, the feeling that the community itself holds some special power. Kanter applied this language to nineteenth century utopian communities, and today this language is reminiscent of stereotypes of cults.[142] These processes turn a community inward, close off relationships with outsiders, and would clearly limit the vitality of a modern intentional Christian community.

Some argue that Koinonia Farm began as a utopian community. Calvin Redekop wrote on Koinonia for *Utopian Studies*, and his assessment of the community focuses on the role of Clarence Jordan's vision and charismatic leadership in the community's

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[141] Kanter, 82-83
[142] Kanter, 112-123

struggles.[143] Redekop believes that Koinonia was directed primarily toward Christian community rather than racial integration, but the unattainable social ideal of true racial harmony was certainly part of Koinonia's vision. Koinonia tried to build relationships with neighbors and depended on the surrounding community for economic survival. The vision of racial integration ran counter to everything in the surrounding society, and Koinonia made no attempt to limit contact with its neighbors. Redekop may be right in saying that the community faltered due to utopian ideals; the community's focus strayed from God and its relationships with the outside world suffered from this lack of foundation.

Intentional Christian Communities and the Universal Church

The notion of the church as the body of Christ is important to Christianity. An intentional Christian community's understanding of this idea can provide indicators to the community's vitality. Dietrich Bonhoeffer uses strong words to speak against movements within Christianity:

> Life together under the Word will remain sound and healthy only where it does not form itself into a movement, an order, a society, a *collegium pietatis*, but rather where it understand itself as being a part of the one, holy catholic, Christian Church, where it shares actively and passively in the sufferings and struggles and promise of the whole Church.[144]

This raises the question of exclusivity: can an order or society or movement successfully see itself as part of the universal Church? Each community sees its relationship to the united body of Christian believers in a different way. Diverse successes exist in particularities, and the particularities of these communities may or not be subject to the criticism that they relate responsibly to the greater Church.

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[143] Redekop, 207
[144] Kanter, 37

All Christian groups interact with other denominations. Ecumenism is a movement within Christianity to promote cooperation and reconciliation between different denominations. The premise for ecumenism is that God calls all to reconciliation and unity of purpose, not to sectarian squabbling. While most groups define all Christians as the body of Christ, many of these groups focus on the differences between their theologies and ways of being Christian. Ecumenically minded Christians focus on the similarities between groups and try to foster cooperation. Reconciliation between different Christian denominations and the unification of the Body of Christ is a fundamental part of Taizé's call and mission. Though Southern Baptists founded Koinonia, the organization is now ecumenical. The Bruderhof communities have reconciled with the Hutterites more than once, only to be expelled each time. Even JPUSA, which explicitly does not allow doctrinal differences within the community, works with other Christian organizations and is open to ecumenical ideas.

The Taizé community is certainly an order, but its ecumenism and inclination toward reconciliation of the universal Church suggest that it may elude Bonhoeffer's criticism. Reconciliation is a fundamental goal of Taizé; ecumenism is only the expression of this reconciliation within Christianity. The Brothers have always wanted members and visitors to remain faithful to their own denominations, encouraging them to return and revitalize their denominations with a spirit of reconciliation. The Brothers live their "parable of communion" as a symbol of the unity and fellowship possible between people of different faiths. The issue of a "Taizé movement" arose in the 1960s, when young people tried to form a movement in the name of Taizé. The Brothers strongly opposed this because the last thing they wanted was to create yet another group

competing for the foremost place among Christian denominations. The Brothers seek to unite all Christians, the body of Christ, into a more universal Church.[145]

Both Jesus People USA and the Bruderhof communities stand in stark contrast to Taizé on this point. JPUSA certainly grew out of a movement and today is directly affiliated with one denomination, the Evangelical Covenant Church. The Bruderhof is a movement. Eberhard Arnold once said, "Christian community can never be a lifestyle or an institution. It must remain a free-flowing movement that is driven by—and that will die without—the wind of the Holy Spirit."[146] Arnold was influenced by his contact with the German youth movements of the 1910s. The idealism and determination of those young people to live for their beliefs with integrity affected Arnold, and his community began as a statement of his own beliefs for Christian life.[147] Arnold wanted to capture the dynamism and possibility that motivated these movements, and he wanted to avoid rigid institutions.

While the language of movements and institutions in these communities differs, each recognizes that openness to change is key for an intentional Christian community to thrive. Contemplative and utopian ideals seem outmoded and stagnant, emphasizing the distinction between community and world to the exclusion of healthy relationships thereof. Both contemplative and utopian communities lack the openness necessary for dialogue with the outside world. They strictly adhere to standards that alienate them from the experiences of outsiders and limit communication. Ecumenism invites openness and reconciliation, but is a slow and difficult process. The key insight toward healthy

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[145] Hicks, 213-214.
[146] Arnold, Eberhard. "Why Community." Excerpted from *Why We Live In Community*. Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1995. Quoted from Bruderhof Community Website. 2001. Accessed 18 April 2001, available at http://beliefs.bruderhof.com/whycommunity.htm.
[147] Baum, 95.

relationships of intentional Christian communities to larger society is derived from the above quotation of Bonhoeffer. Intentional Christian communities must be willing to suffer with the world, sharing its joys and sorrows, and must collaborate with members of surrounding society to solve together the different, yet related, problems of both.

Conclusion: Lessons in Challenge

Intentional Christian communities today face many challenges, and in these challenges the true strengths and weaknesses of these communities come to the fore. Vital intentional Christian communities face these challenges head on, trusting God to lead them through difficulties. The four communities analyzed in this paper each face unique challenges, and these challenges provide insight into the true vitality and possible future of these communities. Each of these communities demonstrates basic human truths about relationships, social justice, and struggle as counter cultural groups within society. Each of these groups can provide models of living Christian discipleship. We can learn from their mistakes as well as their successes as we strive for Christian discipleship in community.

What can outsiders learn by studying intentional Christian communities? In struggles with outside influences, with purpose and direction and within the communities, all Christian communities grow and gain insight as to their purpose and place in the world. We live in an increasingly hectic, winner-take-all world of cold economics and dwindling human contact and empathy. These communities, relying on God's grace and trusting in relationships, stand as witnesses to reconciliation, respect for humanity, and the possibility of peace. Offering hope to an individualistic, fragmented world, intentional Christian communities today offer insights that can help us resist societal expectations of

selfishness and thirst for power, and free us to live for others, for healthy relationships, and for God.

Bruderhof

The Bruderhof communities have certainly struggled with a number of conflicts through their history. The most recent have been in some cases all-out attacks by former members and others that the community has turned into an authoritarian cult. Some claim that the community has restricted some of its former members from contact with family members inside the community, and has denied some scholars the right to closely study their way of life.[148] Former member Ramon Sender Bayaron began an organization of ex-Bruderhof members, beginning with a newsletter with hundreds of subscribers and moving on to a publishing company seemingly dedicated to anti-Bruderhof propaganda. The most negative claims against the Bruderhof are against the leaders of the communities, known as the Elders or the Servants. Indeed, some have criticized the Bruderhof Servants for shaping the Bible to fit their community ideals rather than doing the opposite, modeling community on the Bible. [149]

The object of a community's commitment is another issue raised by study of the Bruderhof communities. As we have seen, commitment in Christian community should be primarily to God and only secondarily to community. Like Bonhoeffer, Eberhard

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[148]Barayon, "The Evolution of the Peregrine Foundation" and Rubin, Julius. "Contested Narratives." Available online 04.18.01 at http://www.sirius.com/~peregrin/jr_cn.html. 1999. My sources for this information are decidedly partisan: Ramon Sender Bayaron and Wayne and Betty Chesley are former Bruderhof members, and James Rubin's arguments against the Bruderhof are among the most polemical and personal that I have seen in social science. While some of their allegations may be believable, the avowed Anti-Bruderhof sentiments behind all of these accusations demonstrate that they are not wholly to be trusted. I cite them irrespective of the potential truth or falsity of their accusations, but because they are good examples of the kind of problems a community can have.

[149] Chesley, Wayne and Betty Chesley. "The Bruderhof Communities, Some Experiences and Observations." Available online 04.18.01 at http://w3.ime.net/~wchesley/bruderhof/our_experiences.html. 1996.

Arnold believed this; in 1933 he said true Christian community must be focused on God, while so-called Christian community based on human feelings and interactions is doomed to failure.[150] While Arnold meant for his words to shape the community, they are meaningless if used to cover an authoritarian system of some holding power over others.[151] The Bruderhof's Internet site quotes Arnold as saying that "community is the solution to all life's problems."[152] This could function to pit human ideals of community against God's word, although this would be a misuse of Arnold's words and not true to his ideals.

Humility in leadership is more than a name; calling one's leaders "Servants" obviously does not preclude them from authoritarian impulses. However, the question of whether or not this situation parallels the ironic "doublespeak" of Orwell's novel *1984* (the Ministry of Peace directs war, etc.) is irrelevant. What matters is that the actions of a community match its rhetoric and that its members and leadership remain open in communication, able to recognize fault in their own actions even as they take seriously the criticisms of others. I do not presume to know to what extent the Bruderhof communities are or are not rigid or authoritarian, but I do know that open dialogue will limit misunderstandings. It is reasonable to say that the Bruderhof communities are failing to communicate properly with outsiders, at least in some specific cases.

Communication seems to be what the Bruderhof is lacking. The community is open to change; their Internet site, modern manufacturing methods, and community-owned jet demonstrate that the community is willing to take advantage of technology.[153]

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[150] Arnold, *God's Revolution,* 29
[151] Arnold, *God's Revolution,* 29.
[152] Arnold, "Why Community?"
[153] "Management Theory's True Believers." (Brief Article) *The Economist* (July 19 1997), 59

Words are meaningless; truth in action brings the best possibilities of theory and words to life, sparkling with vitality and dynamically calling community members to continue their journeys. The Bruderhof communities demonstrate some characteristics of vital intentional Christian communities today, i.e. an active involvement with the world around them, and that they are imperfect; they seem not to communicate openly or develop healthy personal relationships with everyone, leading to some misunderstandings or even malice. The Bruderhof communities, with their strengths and their weaknesses, will continue to offer hope to outsiders interested in biblically based social justice even as they stand as a warning of the ills of poor relationships and communication.

Jesus People USA

JPUSA's system of leadership, with at least seven community elders making up a council of leaders and sharing leadership responsibilities, is cited by Jones as a particularly successful and wise idea so that power does not become too concentrated.[154] This same leadership system has come under fire in recent years, however, especially with regard to leaders' treatment of former community members. Ronald Enroth has written a number of books on cults and manipulation, and mentioned JPUSA in his 1993 book, *Recovering From Churches that Abuse*. Though Enroth has elsewhere praised JPUSA's social outreach, his book intimates authoritarian leadership and alienation of former community members. JPUSA responded quickly; even before Enroth's book was for sale an entire issue of Cornerstone was dedicated to refuting Enroth's claims.[155]

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[154] Jones, 23

[155] LeBlanc, Doug. "Conflict Divides Countercult Leaders." *Christianity Today*, (July 18 1994): 56-57.

JPUSA contacted other scholars of cult issues, including Anson Shupe, who supported JPUSA, describing Enroth's methodology as imprecise and incomplete scholarship.[156]

In April 2001, the Chicago Tribune featured a two-day, front-page story alleging that JPUSA is a disreputable organization featuring authoritarian leadership, government-swindling finances, and a history of preying on the very people the community professes to be serving: social outcasts and misunderstood youth.[157] Kirsten Scharnberg of the Tribune interviewed many ex-members of the community and found many detractors. This latest barrage of allegations prompted another swift response from JPUSA. Additionally, *Christianity Today*'s website issued a defense of JPUSA and reposted all of its articles regarding JPUSA and its historical controversies.[158]

The community has acknowledged that some former members have been upset, but recently has taken steps to ensure that relations between the community and its former members improve. In 1998, an official JPUSA document entitled, "Transitions: Making Your Departure From JPUSA," was presented to help departing members know their rights and responsibilities and what they could expect from JPUSA following their departure. In 2000, a major change took place in JPUSA policy to deal with members leaving the community. An official JPUSA document titled "Individual Term Commitments" states that the community now believes that most members of JPUSA cannot and should not make a lifetime commitment to the community, but rather should

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[156] Shupe, Anson. Interview. "The Pain of Leaving, the Pain of Being Left." *Cornerstone*, Vol. 22, Issue 102/103, (1994), 43.

[157] Scharnberg, Kirsten. "Commune's iron grip tests faith of converts." *Chicago Tribune*. April 1, 2001. Available Online 04.20.01 at http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/metro/chicago/article/0,2669,2-50867,FF.html.

[158] Olson, Ted. "Chicago Tribune Does a Sloppy Job with JPUSA." *Christianity Today*– Weblog April 03, 2001. Available online 04.20.01 at http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/114/23.0.html.

sign on for a renewable term of one to five years.[159] This document indicates recognition within JPUSA that the process of leaving the community is awkward and that an accepted systematic provision for members to leave the community is necessary. It is normal, the document states, that members periodically examine their lives and whether or not God still calls them to live the particular lifestyle of JPUSA. By framing this new decision in terms of God's call to individuals, JPUSA also steers away from considering ex-members as apostates.[160]

This adaptation of a basic rule to fit the reality of community life is a positive sign for the future of JPUSA. Rather than clinging to outdated rules that strain relations within the community and between former members and JPUSA, the community has adapted to accommodate the reality that long-term members often leave and that few should be at JPUSA for a lifetime. While this policy may lead to problems for the community, it could also free some members to feel more secure in expressing doubts about their own call to community or changes in their feelings toward the community. By changing this rule, JPUSA certainly takes a risk, but this demonstration of openness to changing to keep up with reality is an encouraging sign for an intentional Christian community. In the last ten years JPUSA has come under fire regarding its treatment of former members, and it looks like they are trying to act based on those realities. The rule may not be successful, or may be only a ploy to help JPUSA rid itself of dissenting members (as some detractors would probably claim), but based on the criteria for vital community set forth in this paper, this is a sign of an intentional Christian community attempting to remain vital and maintain healthy relationships.

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[159] "Individual Term Commitments" 2000. From JPUSA Official Documents, Available online 04.20.01 at http://www.jpusa.org/jpusa/documents/term_commitments.htm.

[160] "Individual Term Commitments"

Despite its detractors, JPUSA seems to be functioning as an intentional Christian community willing to adapt to changing needs of the community and its neighbors. In 1992 Timothy Jones wrote a cover story on JPUSA for *Christianity Today*. The article focused on the vitality and health of the community, and listed many of the same signs of vitality that this paper does. A vital Christian community, according to the article, must be open to change, intimate and honest, open and inclusive, must maintain distinctions between the community and the outside world, and must recognize Christian community as a gift from God.[161] In this article, Jones sees JPUSA as embodying all of these characteristics. While the article was written before any of the recent allegations against JPUSA, it still seems to fit more than it misses the point. The most vital and healthy aspects of JPUSA seem to be its focus on local outreach and its willingness to adapt to new situations.

Koinonia

In the 1990s Koinonia went through another round of difficulties and completely redefined itself again. In 1992, the community consisted of white liberal partners and poor black workers. Koinonia worship services were held outdoors in a contemporary, laid-back style, and were not attended by black workers.[162] The racial divide across Koinonia had never been bridged, and the workers were still managed by newcomers and had no say in decisions affecting their home. The partners decided that drastic measures were necessary and dissolved the community, turning Koinonia into a nonprofit

[161] Jones, 19-21
[162] McMullen, 240

organization. Now everyone, former partners and employees, was paid to do their jobs, and Koinonia was no longer an intentional Christian community.[163]

In 1993 the board of directors hired Fer-Rell Malone, a black pastor from the area, as operations manager and teamed with white former partner Gail Steiner as a co-director. Malone felt that the community must upgrade its appearance to make money, while Steiner believed in retaining a simplified style. Malone spent money, believing that spending would encourage outside financial help, but the community went into debt. In 1994 Steiner resigned and Malone was fired.[164] The next leader, longtime employee Betty Jean Jones, was hired in 1995 and fired by the board in 1997. Debra Lilly, a recent addition to the community, replaced Jones. By 1998, none of the white former partners remained at Koinonia and Lilly worked essentially alone. In 1999, David Good, a pastor from Connecticut, joined the board of directors, fired Lilly, and began to set Koinonia's finances straight.[165] Koinonia had accumulated a debt of almost one million dollars since 1992, and sold most of its farmland to reduce this debt.[166]

David Good has taken over as the leader of Koinonia's management team, and has sent the community in new directions yet again. The community founded the Clarence Jordan Center for the Advancement of Christian Discipleship as the centerpiece of the new Koinonia. Koinonia hopes to encourage retreats and education of visitors on racial, Christian, and community issues.[167] The community now sees itself as a global

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[163] McMullen, 242
[164] Mcmullen, 242
[165] An interesting aside, though not wholly relevant to this thesis: in February 2000, Debra Lilly was arrested for stealing money and property from Koinonia Partners during her directorship. The results and aftermath of this arrest are unknown to me. "Koinonia's former head arrested for theft. (Brief Article)" *The Christian Century*, v.117, 11, (5 April 2000) 383.
[166] McMullen, 243
[167] McMullen, 245

venture, inviting visitors from afar to participate in its life while trying to remain true to its local roots.[168]

In Good's 2000 address to the Koinonia Board of Directors, he emphasized Clarence Jordan's original vision of a "demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God" as God's longstanding vision for Koinonia. Good suggested that a small intentional Christian community return to Koinonia to serve as a spiritual center for the community's new ambitions. Good stressed the importance of "Christian stewardship" of all resources, calling on the revitalized community to use socially conscious farming and building practices, and to stand up for social justice issues ranging from saving the rainforests to health care to GLBT rights. Good also emphasized that the teaching of true Christian discipleship should be the foundation for the new Koinonia. [169] McMullen's critique of Koinonia as too traditionally "white liberal" to achieve its interracial and Christian communitarian goals certainly apply to this speech.[170] Good's ambitious language echoes and rivals Clarence Jordan's original vision, and these almost utopian ideals may again prove impossible to attain.

Koinonia has by all accounts endured a tumultuous history. What was the community's fundamental purpose? Was it primarily an effort toward living true Christian discipleship in the context of racial integration, or was it a socially conscious witness to the possibility of better lived-out race relations and other social causes? To what did members commit when they agreed to join the community, and why did local blacks that lived and worked there all their lives refuse to join?

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[168] McMullen, 245
[169] Good, David. "A Vision Quest." 10 March 2001. Remarks to Koinonia Board of Directors. Accessed 26 April 2001, available at http://www.koinoniapartners.org/good.htm.
[170] McMullen, 245

Despite Koinonia's failures, the community has shown itself to be a dynamic entity, adapting to changes and involved in the concerns of the world around it, but while its social consciousness lives on, its community roots have died. I believe Koinonia Partners to be a vital organization, capable of educating and inspiring people socially and as Christians, but as an intentional Christian community it failed. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's admonition that any human wish-dream would crumble and endure struggles seems fitting for Koinonia.[171] Following Bonhoeffer's thinking, it is possible to argue that Koinonia began as an attempt at human community more than as Christian community, and this discrepancy led to problems. The Christianity of this intentional community wavered, and eventually the community of this intentional Christian group failed. Even Clarence Jordan's beautiful and powerful vision could not overcome the reality that intentional Christian community must be founded primarily on God and only secondarily on human dreams.

Koinonia has consistently failed to live up to its ambitious and diffuse goals. The community modified its community life in 1962 and abandoned it outright in 1993.[172] The community never lived up to the vision of racial integration for which outsiders knew and commended it. Clarence Jordan's stated goal of living in true Christian discipleship was always overshadowed by the community's place in race relations as well as by financial troubles and intercommunity issues. Still, even in failure of the community itself, the entity of Koinonia Partners has functioned as a symbol of racial unity and the potential power of Christian discipleship in social action. Koinonia has provided inspiration and hope to many in these areas, suggesting that despite its obvious

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[171] Bonhoeffer, 26
[172] Good, "A Vision Quest."

flaws, Koinonia has been and may again be a place of vitality and inspiration, if not an intentional Christian community.

Taizé

Taizé's challenges are a bit more difficult to identify than those of the other communities. While the community began most humbly and with almost no resources, its growth and current popularity have earned positive reviews from every source I can find. Taizé is the most vital of the four intentional Christian communities studied here. The issue of a "Taizé movement" that came about in the 1960s was dealt with in a very direct manner, and the community has unfailingly oriented itself toward reconciliation between churches, nationalities, languages, and individuals. Taizé did not set out to solve the problems of the world, but the community's witness as a "parable of communion" has deeply affected the lives of Christians around the world.

In one way, however, the 60-year-old community is still in its infancy. At age 86, Brother Roger is still the heart and soul of Taizé, and still officially leads the community. His vision has led the community safe thus far, but soon the vision will be passed on. Many of the original Brothers have died, and soon the community will be without its founder and spiritual leader. This promises to pose unforeseen challenges to the Taizé community; no matter what provisions have been made, the loss of Brother Roger will change Taizé in some way.

When asked about the calling of the community, Brother Roger of Taizé replied, "In our common life, we can only move forward by discovering over anew the miracle of love, in daily forgiveness, heartfelt trust, and peace-filled contemplation of those entrusted to us. When we move away from the miracle of love, all is lost, everything

comes apart."[173] He goes on to say that love is found through forgiveness, trust, and peaceful interaction with others, both inside and outside the community.[174] God calls the Brothers to love each other and others and to live that love in mercy and honest trust. This is a major goal of the Taizé community, directing the Brothers' relationships among themselves and with outsiders. Based on my own interactions with some of the Brothers in my visits to Taizé and at other times, I can attest that at least the few Brothers I have spoken with have treated others with the utmost respect and trust, willing to really listen and trust, not imposing their own views or experiences but simply listening to others and humbly share their insights only when asked to do so. These simple messages, discovering love in trust and forgiveness and sharing an ear and an open heart with strangers, may be Taizé's most important lessons for the world. Reconciliation is a lifestyle at Taizé, not only a goal, and the healing of broken relationships through these simple acts are steps everyone can take toward healing brokenness in the world.

What Can We Learn from Intentional Christian Communities?

The answers to the problems of society are not always clear but the seeds of these answers exist in the present. Chittiser speaks forcefully about the power of the present, proclaiming that without value in the present, the future of religious life is irrelevant. For Chittister, the future success of any community is contained in the actions and bodies that now exist in the community; the future does not appear from nowhere but grows out of the daily life of current community members.[175] This language can easily be applied to those outside community life. The seeds for new ways of looking have been planted, and by looking at intentional Christian communities some of these seeds become visible.

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[173] Roger,. "The Community."
[174] Roger, "The Community."
[175] Chittister, 38

Christians can gain encouragement from the level of discipleship in intentional Christian communities, and the social awareness stemming from this discipleship can suggest courses of action for those interested in regaining a sense of the importance of relationships and justice in people's lives.

Commitment: Freedom from Expectations

One aspect of intentional Christian community that can inform or inspire outsiders is its level of commitment. God is the focus of this commitment. A community member's commitment to living out God's call to Christian discipleship in community provides a solid foundation, a focus and context for one's life. A community member can build on this foundation of commitment to God a set of values running counter to the outside society's individualism. Jesus People USA provides us with a great example of such counter cultural values. JPUSA grew out of the counter cultural movement of the 1960s, but it is JPUSA members' commitment to God that enables them to live out God's call of service of neighbors in need. Relying on God, JPUSA members are freed of outside society's expectations, and are free to live for others.

Freedom to Serve: Hospitality

Hospitality is important to intentional Christian communities now as a means of establishing healthy, open relationships with the world outside the community. Hospitality is based in the biblical notion that Christ comes in the form of the poor neighbor, the needy child, or any other visitor, and should receive the respect and full effort of his hosts Hospitality implies openness to the world around, welcome of outsiders, and response to the needs of others, all of which are positive characteristics in intentional Christian communities, or for that matter, in everyone. Christine Pohl argues

that life in community stands as a model of hospitality to be followed by all Christians.[176] The lives of the Brothers of Taizé exemplify hospitality. The Brothers respond to the needs of their visitors by showing them the possibility of a life of commitment to God and reconciliation. The experience of Taizé inspires visitors to live in a spirit of openness and to respond to the needs of others in hospitality.

Freedom to Live for Others

Acknowledgement of the web of relationships that sustains any person is an invaluable lesson of life in community. Community members trust God to provide for them, constantly reinforcing this trust through a life in community of material and spiritual goods. . No one is able to meet all of her or his own needs, and in thanking others for their providence community members come to recognize their roles as providers for others. Bruderhof members recognize this interdependence and work to provide for each other, knowing that each day they receive more than they earn. Bruderhof members allow this knowledge to inform their actions every day, and their orientation toward mutual love, thankfulness, and service results in mutual rewards.

A Symbol of Hope

One of the primary functions of intentional Christian community today is to act as a symbol of hope for a more caring, connected, human world. Like each individual, every community struggles with its own goals and expectations. Even in the failure of its community life, Koinonia has functioned as a symbol of hope for society. In the eyes of many, Koinonia's vision of Christian discipleship and racial harmony has been far more powerful than the failure of the community itself. The differing goals and ambitions of

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[176] Winner, Laura F. "Sabbath and Strangers." *The Christian Century*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (March/April 2000), 16.

individuals plagued the community itself, but the idea of Koinonia continues to inspire Christians and people committed to racial harmony.

Intentional Christian communities are a viable and vital part of the world today. In a world of individualism and brokenness, these communities witness to the possibility of a life ordered by the value of healthy relationships, openness, commitment, and hope. Intentional Christian community members do not to lose sight of Christ as the center of Christian community. For a vital, open, life-giving intentional Christian community, ministry and service are necessary outgrowths of this focus on Christ; for the individual, a life oriented toward Christian discipleship demands service to others and an attitude of thankfulness and hospitality. Intentional Christian communities live out their call to service in community, and invite others to discern and live their own calls. As symbol and as concrete presence, intentional Christian communities offer a vision of a more vital, open world.

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