

Baptist Distinctives Empower Work for the Common Good
Practical Theological Reflection on Two Case Studies

Dr. Tracy Hartman
Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond

Introduction

In many fields, including theology, academicians often subscribe to a methodology that proceeds from theory to practice. In this process, one studies a theory, method or premise and then seeks how to apply the acquired knowledge to a concrete situation. However, none of us comes to any type of study as a tabula rasa waiting to be filled, rather we come to the classroom or the reflective task with questions that are shaped by our religious practices.¹ Further, all of our practices, even religious ones, are theory-laden, whether we are aware of it or not. Therefore, practical theologians have come to espouse a praxis-theory-praxis approach to study and theological reflection. In this process, one begins with praxis, uses the tools of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience to examine and reflect on the praxis, and then utilizes new learning and knowledge to become a more faithful practitioner. James Poling and Donald Miller define practical theology as reflection arising out of the living experiences of communities of faith and resulting in faith-informed interpretations that serve to guide the ongoing life and actions of those communities.²

This essay will utilize the praxis-theory-praxis approach of practical theology to study four Baptists (Minnie James, Clarence Jordan and Millard and Linda Fuller) who founded two programs that have contributed in significant ways to the common good. The lenses of the Baptist distinctives of Bible freedom and soul freedom and the tools of theological reflection will be utilized to examine the lived experiences of these individuals and the praxis of the programs they founded. Correctives will be

¹ Don S. Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 6-7.

² James Poling and Donald Miller, Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 62.

offered for inherent dangers and challenges in the programs that are identified in the reflection process in hopes that both groups may move towards more faithful orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

The Common Good

The idea of a common good originated in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Contemporary ethicist John Rawls defined the common good as "certain general conditions that are...equally to everyone's advantage." The Catholic religious tradition, which has a long history of struggling to define and promote the common good, defines it as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment."³ Examples of parts of the common good include accessible and affordable health care and housing, adequate sustenance, public safety and security, peace, a just legal and political system, a healthy environment, and a stable economic system. For the purpose of this essay, the common good is defined as conditions that contribute to the holistic well being of individuals and communities.⁴

Baptist Distinctives Defined

In his book The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms, Walter B. Shurden identifies four freedoms that have characterized Baptists through the centuries: Bible freedom soul freedom, church freedom, and religious freedom.⁵ In this essay, theological reflection will illustrate how Baptists exercise Bible freedom and soul freedom to read and interpret Scripture and respond to the promptings of God to work for the common good.

³ Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, S.J., and Michael J. Meyer, "The Common Good," Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University 4 June 2007
<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/commongood.html>.

⁴The common good is defined in numerous ways, and there are positive and negative aspects to each definition. The theological implications, pros and cons, and impediments to each definition are beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵ Walter B. Shurden, The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishers, 1993)
5. Shurden arrived at these distinctives by studying historic documents such as denominational documents from the Northern, Southern, American and National Baptist Conventions, the Alliance of Baptists, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and a diversity of European Baptist groups as well as sermons and addresses given at meetings of the Baptist World Alliance from 1905 to 1980. Only two, Bible freedom and soul freedom, will be defined and discussed in this paper.

Bible freedom is the historic Baptist affirmation that the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, must be central in the life of the individual and church and that Christians, with the best and most scholarly tools of inquiry, are both free and obligated to study and obey the Scripture. As Shurden notes

Because of the power of Scripture to make the will of God known to us, the Bible is a dynamic book. As people read and interpret scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their lives are transformed . . . Baptists wanted freedom of access to the Bible “for” the purpose of continuing obedience to the Word of God.⁶

Historically, Baptists have read and studied Scripture, listened for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and then lived out their faith in ways that addressed the needs of each generation and contributed to the common good.

Soul freedom is defined as the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to deal with God without the imposition of creed, the interference of clergy, or the intervention of civil government. Also known as the priesthood of all believers, soul freedom implies that all believers share as equals in Christ’s Body, the church, and have a priestly role toward God and each other. Soul freedom affirms our core belief in individual choice. We believe that each person was created in the image of God, and therefore, is able and responsible, under God, to make moral, spiritual, and religious decisions.⁷ However, soul freedom does not justify individualism or self-sufficiency. Baptists have also understood that each individual is a part of the larger Christian community and that each is responsible to exercise his/her soul freedom within this community.

For centuries, Baptists have been exercising Bible and soul freedoms in order to hear God speak through the dynamic pages of Scripture and to respond to the call to work for the common good. Some have lived out these callings within the church, others by working alongside the church through businesses or non-profit agencies.

A Church Based Case Study

⁶Ibid., 12.

⁷Ibid., 24.

In June 1894, Minnie Lou Kennedy, a staunch Episcopalian, married William Carey James, a young Baptist. Out of love and respect for one another, each chose to maintain their own denominational affiliation. Soon after, however, William James felt a call to vocational ministry, and he enrolled at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. After completing his studies, Rev. James began to serve a Baptist congregation. Minnie Lou, desiring to support her husband in his new call and occupation, expressed that she was willing to change her denominational affiliation. Her husband is reported to have replied that he wanted no “Baptist by convenience” in his church. Unless Minnie became a “Baptist by conviction,” he would not accept her membership. Practicing Bible freedom, Minnie studied the Scriptures on her own and four years later became “a (Southern) Baptist by conviction.”⁸

In 1907, the James’ moved to Richmond, Virginia. Not long after their arrival, in an illustration of soul freedom, Minnie Lou, heard and answered a call to serve as the president of the Virginia Women’s Missionary Union. In 1912, she led the committee to plan the Jubilate Anniversary for the WMU. Her outstanding work led to her election as president of the multi-state “Southern Union” of the Women’s Missionary Union. In this role, she participated in the committee that recommended the formation of the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention, a program that would contribute to the common good by allowing churches to join together in the support of missions and education.

Prior to the formation of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists followed the societal approach to fund-raising; each group made a direct appeal to individual churches for contributions. This method led to competition among the groups for donations, budget shortfalls, and overlapping campaigns. Through the Cooperative Program, congregants would give money to their local church; which pooled a portion of their funds with those of other churches. Some funds would remain at the

⁸ Fred Anderson, “This Month in our History, with Fred Anderson,” *Advance Notice*, eNewsletter of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board, February 2007. Retrieved February 22, 2007.

state level to support local work and a percentage would be sent to the national level. Messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) would vote on how to distribute these funds.

The Cooperative Program, which was officially launched in 1925, proved to be a brilliant success. Parishioners believed their gifts were making a difference and churches uniting together could accomplish more for the common good than churches acting independently. In 2005, the SBC reported 43,700 churches with a total membership of 16.3 million people. Their gifts to further the common good through the Cooperative Program for state and SBC work totaled \$522 million dollars.⁹ In 2006, the SBC portion of Cooperative Program dollars was \$195,948,423. The majority of the SBC allotment (nearly 73%) is designated for missions. Currently the International Mission Board supports 5,036 missionaries working with 1,193 people groups while the North American Mission Board supports 5,364 missionaries. Six theological seminaries that educate 16,000 students each year receive 21.6% of the SBC allotment. The SBC also contributes to the common good by supporting campus ministries, children's homes, new church plants, and evangelistic efforts.

Unfortunately, three challenges arose that impeded the effectiveness of the Cooperative Program for the common good. First, in the 1980's, fundamentalists began to take control of the SBC. For many years, the Southern Baptist umbrella was broad enough to shelter significant theological diversity, and each local church was an autonomous body (exercising the Baptist distinctive of Church Freedom). Churches could ordain and call whomever they wished and they were free to be stewards of their resources as they felt called and directed, cooperating with the convention as they saw fit. In 1925, the convention adopted The Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) as guiding doctrinal principles, but the tenants were broad and non-binding on local congregations.¹⁰

⁹All statistics in this section are from <http://www.cpmissions.net/2003/what%20is%20cp.asp>. Information last retrieved May 31, 2007.

¹⁰The Baptist Faith and Message was revised in 1963 and again in 2000. Theologically moderate churches still support the 1963 version, while more conservative congregations and the SBC use the 2000 version. <http://www.mainstreambaptists.org/mob1/articles.htm> provides both versions in parallel.

Many of these historic principles began to change in the early 1980's. Practical theologians Poling and Miller assert that the fundamentalists' rigid and authoritarian structures and leadership that enforce conformity in thought and behavior may in part be a response to the anxiety of pluralism.¹¹ This appears to be true in SBC life. Although each church remains autonomous, convention officials have become increasingly prescriptive and controlling theologically. In their formal (confessed) theology, convention officials (and the 2000 revision of the BF&M) state "we honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God."¹² However, the same document restricts both the Bible and soul freedoms of women by limiting their role in both church and home. In their functional (lived) theology, some local associations will withdraw fellowship from churches that hire a woman as their senior pastor, and ordained Southern Baptist women will not be appointed to SBC boards as missionaries, campus ministers or military chaplains. These restrictions limit the ability of called and gifted women to contribute to the common good in these areas.

Convention officials, in their formal theology, state that they are not a creedal people. However, in their current functional theology, all employees of SBC agencies, including missionaries, are required to sign a statement of agreement with the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message as a condition of employment. When this condition was initiated, missionaries responded in one of three ways. Some refused to sign because they disagreed with both the content of the new BF&M and because they believed the requirement violated the Baptist commitment to remaining a non-creedal people. Some missionaries, although they agreed with the content, refused to sign because as Baptists they also objected to the creedal nature of the requirement. Still others signed willingly, expressing no disagreement with either change.

¹¹Poling and Miller, 17.

¹²2000 Baptist Faith and Message, Preamble.

The climate created by the take-over limited Bible and soul freedom and excluded many more Baptists from full participation in denominational life. The departure of significant numbers of missionaries, ministers, congregants and churches from SBC life and the negative response of many non-Baptists and non-Christians to our in-fighting hindered the ability of Southern Baptists to work for the common good.

Theological reflection on the take-over of the SBC led to the formation of two new Baptist groups that contribute to the common good by following the cooperative model for fellowship and missions. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which started in 1991, is not a convention or denomination. Rather, it is a loose fellowship of churches and like-minded partners organized around belief in the historic Baptist principles of soul freedom, Bible freedom, church freedom and religious freedom. Currently, 1,900 churches partner together to support more than 160 Global Missions field personnel. CBF also partners with fourteen moderate theological schools that enroll over 2,000 students.¹³

The Alliance of Baptists, a smaller group that emerged out of the SBC controversy, contributes to the common good by making connections. When they identify needs, whether local, national, or global, they set about finding ways to meet those needs by working with other organizations.¹⁴ Last year, through a small missions offering, nearly 120 affiliating churches provided grants totaling \$125,000 to twenty-seven partner organizations.

Passivity is the second challenge that arose with the development of the Cooperative Program. Unfortunately, many Baptists came to believe that if they gave financially to mission offerings, they were relieved of the responsibility of hands-on involvement in missions. For many years, involvement in missions for Women's Missionary Union groups meant raising funds and praying for vocational

¹³ <https://www.thefellowship.info/inside%20cbf/faq.icm>, retrieved May 31, 2007.

¹⁴ http://www.allianceofbaptists.org/mission_offering2007.htm, Retrieved May 31, 2007

(usually foreign) missionaries, not participating actively in missions. This passivity became an embedded theology in many SBC churches.¹⁵

In recent years, the opposite problem has occurred with the rise of post-modernism. Today, in the third challenge to the common good through cooperative giving, many individuals and some local churches have become suspicious of, instead of loyal to, larger institutional structures. As a result, many churches now want to invest their time and mission dollars in local projects where they identify a need, have control of how resources are invested, and get to participate in bringing about visible results. Therefore, the challenge for many Baptist groups is to discover ways to contribute to the common good by empowering local, hands-on missions without abandoning cooperative works and returning to the societal method of giving. Practical theologian David Tracy advocates this “bifocal perspective,” which takes into consideration what is taking place in the local setting and the global world. Tracy warns, “to assume that only the ‘local situation’ or only the ‘global situation’ demands attention is to downplay, however unconsciously, the full demands of all practical-theological analyses of the situation.”¹⁶

American Baptist Churches are acknowledging and working with this trend. For this group, the local church is the fundamental unit of mission in denominational life. However, they also acknowledge that God’s family extends beyond local churches and that God calls us to cooperative ministries. Currently, over 1.5 million people in 5,800 congregations call themselves American Baptists, and they donate over \$40 million annually to cooperative work. This group works within geographical regions and with 170 mission partnerships in 70 countries. They cooperate with the Baptist World Alliance, the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the Churches of Christ among others.¹⁷

¹⁵ An embedded theology is defined as a belief that is rooted in the preaching and practices of the church and its members. It is an implicit theology that Christians live out in their daily lives. Howard Stone and James Duke, How to Think Theologically (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 13.

¹⁶ David Tracy, “Practical Theology in the Situation of Global Pluralism” in Formation and Reflection, eds. Lewis S. Mudge & James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p.140.

¹⁷ www.abc-usa.org Last retrieved May 31, 2007

American Baptists also trace their commitment to the common good to the historic Baptist principles of Bible and soul freedom. They believe that the committed individual Christian can and should approach God directly and that individual gifts of ministry should be shared. American Baptists hold that all who truly seek God are both competent and called to develop in that relationship. They have rejected creeds or other statements that might compromise each believer's obligation to interpret Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and within the community of faith. American Baptists also celebrate the special gifts of all believers testifying that God can use each person in ministry.¹⁸

A Para-Church Case Study

In 1942, Clarence Jordan, along with three others, exercised Bible and soul freedom by founding Koinonia Farms, an intentional Christian community as a “demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God.”¹⁹ For them, this meant a community of believers sharing life and following the example of the first Christian communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles, even amidst the poverty and racism of the rural South.

Members of the farm contributed to the common good in pragmatic, spiritual, and social justice ways. Clarence Jordan, who held an undergraduate degree in agriculture from the University of Georgia, wanted to use his knowledge of scientific farming “to seek to conserve the soil, God’s holy earth” and to help the poor, who in that context were neighboring black sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Jordan and his partner England were ordained ministers and professors (Jordan held a doctorate in New Testament Greek) and part of their vision was to offer training to African American ministers living in the area. For the first few years of Koinonia, Jordan, in particular, was welcomed to preach and teach in local churches. The demands of farming in those early years did not allow time for formal training of others, but he used these visits to both black and white churches to offer guidance. They envisioned an interracial community where blacks and whites could live and work together in a spirit of partnership.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ www.koiniapartners.org, Last retrieved June 1, 2007.

Based on this radical call to discipleship, Koinonia's very presence confronted racism, militarism and materialism with its core commitments to treat all human beings with dignity and justice, to choose love over violence, to share all possessions and live simply, and to be stewards of the land and its natural resources. During the Civil Rights movement, Koinonia remained a witness to nonviolence and racial equality as its members withstood firebombs, bullets, KKK rallies, death threats, property damage, excommunication from churches, and economic boycotts. Although the farm and its members suffered greatly during this time, they survived and continued their work.

In the meantime, college student, Millard Fuller was about the business of amassing a personal fortune. An entrepreneur from his earliest days, he and a college friend began by using profits from sales to buy and renovate buildings near the campus of the University of Alabama for student housing.²⁰ After graduation he and his friend partnered in a law firm, but they made their money in publishing and mail order sales. By the time he was just thirty-one, Millard's net worth topped one million dollars. However, his quest had cost him estrangement from God and the church, his personal health and integrity, and very nearly his marriage.²¹

In the early 1970's, Fuller exercised both Bible and soul freedom during a time of soul-searching that led to reconciliation with God and his wife. This led to a month-long stay at Koinonia Farms where they continued searching for a new focus in their lives. At the end of the month, they sold nearly everything they owned, left the business world, and answered a call to serve for two years as missionaries in Africa.

Upon their return to Koinonia, the Fullers and Jordan developed the concept of "partnership housing," where those in need of adequate shelter would work side by side with volunteers to build simple, decent houses. The houses would be built with no profit added and no interest charged. Building would be financed by a revolving Fund for Humanity. The fund's money would come from the new

²⁰ Millard Fuller and Diane Scott, *Love in the Mortar Joints* (Association Press, 1980), 36-37.

Fuller would draw on this experience as well as experiences helping his father repair buildings on their farm later in the founding of Habitat for Humanity.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 42-52.

homeowners' house payments, donations and no-interest loans provided by supporters and money earned by fund-raising activities. The monies in the Fund for Humanity would be used to build more houses.

In a letter to Koinonia supporters, Jordan and Fuller articulated their theology:

What the poor need is not charity but capital, not caseworkers but co-workers. And what the rich need is a wise, honorable and just way of divesting themselves of their overabundance. The Fund for Humanity will meet both of these needs. Money for the fund will come from shared gifts by those who feel they have more than they need and from non-interest bearing loans from those who cannot afford to make a gift but who do want to provide working capital for the disinherited. The fund will give away no money. It is not a handout.²²

This ministry eventually led to Millard and Linda Fuller founding Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) in 1976. Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to eliminating substandard housing and homelessness worldwide and to making adequate, affordable shelter a matter of conscience and action. Habitat is founded on the conviction that every man, woman and child should have a simple, decent, affordable place to live in dignity and safety. Habitat has an open-door policy; all who desire to be a part of this work are welcome, regardless of religious preference or background. Habitat for Humanity has always had a policy of building with people in need regardless of race or religion, and they welcome volunteers and supporters from all backgrounds.

The work of Habitat for Humanity is driven by the desire to give tangible expression to the love of God through the work of eliminating poverty housing. Habitat's mission and methods are predominantly derived from three theological concepts. The first is the necessity of putting faith into action. The second is the "economics of Jesus," the idea that when people act in response to human need, giving what they have without seeking profit or interest, that God magnifies the effects of their efforts. The third is the "Theology of the Hammer." Habitat is a partnership founded on common ground; bridging theological differences by putting love into action. "Everyone can use the hammer as an instrument to manifest God's love," Fuller states. "We may disagree on all sorts of other things ... but

²² www.habitat.org. Retrieved February 23, 2007

we can agree on the idea of building homes with God's people in need, and in doing so using biblical economics: no profit and no interest."²³

HFHI contributes to the common good in many ways. The most basic is by overseeing the construction of over 200,000 homes in 3,000 communities to date. Fuller reports, "Often a Habitat house changes attitudes, brings people together, and equips them for new and better opportunities in life. . . . Time after time we see people move into Habitat houses and go back to school, enter college, do all sorts of things they never dreamed were within their reach before they had the enveloping hope of a simple, decent place to live."²⁴ For others, clean basic homes with adequate plumbing, sanitation, and solid walls that keep out rodents significantly reduce stress, sickness, and premature death.²⁵

Habitat homes contribute to the larger common good by transforming neighborhoods. For example, in the Midtown area of Jackson, Mississippi, the effect of HFHI has been profound. Where there were once boarded up shacks and crack houses, there are children playing and a profusion of flowers. Development plans call for at least sixty houses in the area. Residents report that they now hear the sounds of hammers and saws instead of gunfire and police sirens. The neighborhood is coming back to life.²⁶

The mobilization of volunteers allows thousands of people around the world to work toward the common good. The HFHI website currently lists eight different volunteer programs including women builds, RV Care-a-Vanners, youth builds, disaster relief and international opportunities.²⁷ Many schools, companies, churches and civic organizations sponsor affiliates and help to build local homes. Volunteers often speak of friendships formed and personal faith nurtured as a result of their participation with HFHI.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Millard Fuller, A Simple, Decent Place to Live: The Building Realization of Habitat for Humanity (USA: Habitat for Humanity, 1995), 89-90.

²⁵ Millard Fuller, More Than Houses: How Habitat for Humanity is Transforming Lives and Neighborhoods (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 107.

²⁶ A Simple, Decent Place to Live, 89.

²⁷ http://www.habitat.org/getinv/volunteer_programs.aspx, Retrieved June 1, 2007.

The volunteer nature of HFHI also contributes to the common good by helping people find meaning and live out their values. Jerome Baggett, writes,

Voluntary associations not only provide individuals with numerous and manageable volunteer roles to enact their deepest values, they are also institutional bearers of evocative narratives and language through which those values come to make sense and actually obligate people to behave in accordance with them. . . . Voluntary associations are, in the words of Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, “the value-generating and value maintaining agencies in society” because they contribute to forming us and allowing us to reach beyond the narrow confines of our own private interests.²⁸

One of Fuller’s goals for HFHI is to contribute to the common good by bridging religious, political and culture differences through the Theology of the Hammer. The organization’s open volunteerism policy encourages multi-faith, multi-political and cross-cultural partnerships to build and renovate homes. In Belfast Ireland, Catholics and Protestants work together on Habitat homes. In other cities Baptists and Muslims or Methodists and Latter Day Saints will partner.²⁹

HFHI faces several theological challenges as the organization grows. First, large influential government and private market sectors, which are critical components of the broader social ecology, can influence volunteer-sector organizations in ways that make it difficult for them to operate according to their core principles and values. For example, most para-church organizations, such as HFHI, must compete with secular non-profits for charitable dollars. One way they do this is by assuring potential donors that they are efficient, effective, no-nonsense people. Although this is important, these secular values are at times at odds with sacred institutional values such as dignity, compassion, and social justice.³⁰

Second, although it is a non-profit ecumenical Christian organization, HFHI provides space for a pragmatic, non-doctrinal, and individual-based religiosity that is well-suited and attractive to American secular culture. Habitat, and other organizations like it, must find a balance between the virtue of being

²⁸ Jerome Baggett Habitat for Humanity: Building Private Homes, Building Public Religion (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 5-6. Baggett has studied HFHI in great depth and offers a thorough theological and social critique of the organization in this work.

²⁹ More Than Houses, 230-247.

³⁰ Baggett, 25.

non-dogmatic and the vice of being so inclusive that they are no longer distinguishable from the larger society. Without the powerful symbols and narratives provided by particular normative traditions (Christianity in this case) they may fail to capture the commitment of supporters and lose their effectiveness.³¹

Thirdly, there is concern about whether or not the organization can continue to sustain its resistance to broader capitalistic issues that gave birth to the very problems it seeks to solve. At the core of HFHI is the premise that inadequate housing disempowers people and that adequate housing empowers them to become better citizens who will assume responsibility to contribute to the common good. However, when asked why so many financially secure and properly housed Americans do not contribute to the common good, some HFHI respondents argued that middle and upper class people were also disempowered by the very American dream they are trying to help constituents achieve. The privileged become so preoccupied with their careers and possessions that they have little time or energy left to contribute to the good of their communities. Others argued that homeownership through a HFHI partnership was just a step towards decency, not a total realization of the American dream.³² However, critics contend that a necessary suspicion of the capitalistic market that causes the deeper issues surrounding this discussion is lacking at HFHI.

Some observers and participants have also identified a trend toward paternalism in some HFHI affiliates. Some homeowners say that their contributions are less valued than those of volunteers. Local affiliates in some areas seek to maintain control over families and their homes long after construction is complete, however homeowners fear voicing dissent. These actions and attitudes are disempowering to new homeowners and are contrary to Habitat's fundamental goals. Others argue that the breaking down of barriers, an important part of the HFHI vision, occurs more for volunteers stepping out of their

³¹Ibid., 27.

³²Ibid., 105.

comfort zones and confronting their fears, than it does for homeowners; many of whom will never enjoy the comfortable standard of living assumed by even the most well-meaning and committed volunteers.³³

HFHI faced a serious challenge in 2005 when the Board of Directors fired Millard Fuller (and his wife Linda) in the midst of accusations of sexual harassment. It appeared to many that Fuller's formal theology of treating all persons equally and with dignity and respect was inconsistent with his functional theology and behavior. Although there was insufficient evidence to corroborate the complaint, HFHI said Fuller engaged in a "pattern of ongoing public comments and communications ... that have been divisive and disruptive to the organization's work."³⁴ Although Fuller insists that he, like HFHI supporter and former president Jimmy Carter, is by nature an affectionate by-product of Southern culture, there are numerous reports of similar incidents dating back to the Fullers' time at Koinonia Farms.³⁵ Although there was considerable stir at the time of the firing, HFHI seems to have weathered this storm without serious long-term consequences. This is particularly significant at a time when many in society look for any reason to discredit organizations with any type of religious affiliation.

Jerome Baggett's thoughtful and thorough assessment of HFHI illustrates the necessity of intentional practical theological reflection on organizations and their praxis. Many of the challenges that he discusses can be addressed by the organization now that his reflection has raised awareness. Hopefully, working on these issues will allow Habitat to continue to work even more faithfully for the common good.

³³Ibid., 115-132.

³⁴<http://ctlibrary.com/34697>, Retrieved June 1, 2007.

³⁵<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18460-2005Mar8.html>, Retrieved June 1, 2007.

Bibliography

American Baptist Churches-USA. 31 May 2007. <<http://www.abc-usa.org>>.

Fred Anderson, "This Month in our History, with Fred Anderson," *Advance Notice*, eNewsletter of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board, February 2007.

Baggett, Jerome. Habitat for Humanity: Building Private Homes, Building Public Religion. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Baptist Faith and Message. 31 May 2007. <<http://www.mainstreambaptists.org/mob1/articles.htm>>

Browning, Don S. A Fundamental Practical Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Cooperative Program Missions. 31 May 2007.
<<http://www.cpmisions.net/2003/what%20is%20cp.asp>>.

Cooperman, Allen. "Harassment Claims Roil Habitat for Humanity." Washington Post.com. 9 March 2005. Retrieved 31 May 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18460-2005Mar8.html>.

Fuller, Millard. A Simple, Decent Place to Live: The Building Realization of Habitat for Humanity. (USA: Habitat for Humanity, 1995.

----- More Than Houses: How Habitat for Humanity is Transforming Lives and Neighborhoods. Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000.

Fuller, Millard and Diane Scott, Love in the Mortar Joints. Association Press, 1980.

Habitat for Humanity International. 1 June 2007. <<http://www.habitat.org>>.

Jewell, Jim. "Questions Follow Fuller's Firing From Habitat for Humanity." Christianity Today Library.com. February, 2005. 31 May 2007. <<http://ctlibrary.com/34697>>.

Koinania Partners. 1 June 2007. <<http://www.koiniapartners.org>>.

Poling James and Donald Miller. Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985.

Shurden, Walter B. The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms. Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1993.

Stone, Howard and James Duke. How to Think Theologically. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Tracy, David. "Practical Theology in the Situation of Global Pluralism." Formation and Reflection. Eds. Lewis S. Mudge & James N. Poling. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Velasquez, Manuel, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, S.J., and Michael J. Meyer, "The Good," Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University 4 June 2007
<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/commongood.html>. Common