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The Patient Ferment of the Early Church, by Alan Kreider. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. 321 pp. ISBN 978-0-8010-4849-4. Softcover, US\$26.99.

Something unique happened in Christianity's first 300 years. It grew at a phenomenal rate in spite of persecution and social conventions. Its inner

dynamic was not a remarkable organization geared for growth. Early Christians wrote no treatises on mission strategy, nor were there any exhortations to evangelism recorded in their works. In contrast to some contemporary proponents of church growth, the early church's worship services were not means of evangelism. In fact, after 68 CE most Christian worship services were closed to anyone who was not a baptized member.

So how did the Christian church grow from a handful of people in 31 CE to an estimated 5 million believers 300 years later? Many historians suggest reasons for this rapid growth. A close examination of these reasons reveals a focus on external factors that may have contributed to this growth but do not take into account factors related to the inner life of the church.

Some other earlier explanations include the suggestion that the early church developed their ideas in such a way that when they engaged with other religions, they prevailed. Others highlight the inclusive nature of the church, and how it welcomed men and women, Jews and Greeks, Romans and barbarians. Edward Gibbon listed a number of factors he believed were responsible for the success of the church. He noted that the early church was intolerant of aberrant ideas, and thus able to retain an internal cohesiveness; that their moral lives were upright, authentic, and attractive; and that their organization was superior to any other's. In addition, he noted that they exhibited miraculous powers and taught a believable gospel of the afterlife. Kenneth Scott Latourette emphasized that the most important factor in early Christian growth was the mysterious power of the lives of the early believers (*The First Five Centuries*, 167-169).

In this volume, Kreider does not argue with any of these earlier explanations. Yet he also asserts that a more complete explanation must include the inner dynamic of Christianity. Thus, he posits four additional factors that focus on patience and the inner life of the church.

Kreider begins by discussing what the early church meant by the Latin word *patientia*. Oddly, much of his discussion of definitions is relegated to a footnote. Two Greek words with quite disparate meanings are translated as *patientia*. First, *makrothumia* refers to the longsuffering of the powerful who choose not to use their power. Second, *hupomone* refers to the powerless person who has no choice but to be non-violent. The Latin word *patientia* combines the nuances of these two meanings. In English, the word is sometimes translated as "forbearance" or "endurance" (p. 14). After this brief discussion, Kreider simply uses the English word "patience" to reflect all of these nuances. In this reviewer's opinion, a more thorough discussion about the meaning of these words and their relationship to each other would have been helpful.

Kreider suggests that patience was centrally important to the early Christians even though the Greco-Roman world denigrated it. Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius each wrote an entire treatise about this virtue. For them, patience meant that instead of controlling events, being anxious, in a hurry, or using force to achieve their ends, they should instead trust God. They lived in an impatient society. Their patient behavior stood out and became one of their most distinctive and attractive qualities. Kreider uses the well-known story of Perpetua and Felicitas to illustrate this virtue. He points out that Perpetua had learned the Christian faith not only on an intellectual level, but also on the level of behavior. The activities that taught her patience included seeing role models of patience, memorizing Scripture, preparation to stand up under the pressure of torture, and, participation in the ritual activities of the supper and the kiss of peace. Her goal was to be patient in the face of martyrdom. There was a theological foundation for this kind of patience. God had been patient and forgiving of them so they now were able to be patient and forgiving in the face of persecution and the threat of death.

As the second additional factor explaining the “improbable rise of Christianity,” Kreider suggests that the *habitus*, the embodied behavior of Christians, was their most effective evangelistic activity. The early documents rarely record conversions coming from the winning of arguments; rather men and women were attracted to the church by the distinctive and intriguing patience they saw demonstrated in the physical lives of Christians. They had learned how to express their beliefs with their behavior. In contrast to everyone else, they were patient and showed mercy because they believed that God had shown patience and mercy toward humanity and to them personally.

How did this happen? Many might argue that habits cannot be changed by deliberate attention. Kreider argues that the early church demonstrated that it was possible, and even more, it was incredibly attractive. The normal Roman *habitus* involved belonging to certain social institutions and remaining within their social status. It involved deference to those in authority out of fear of what might happen if they did not. In contrast, the Christian *habitus* offered a new and attractive option about how to live. It also involved belonging to a group, but it was a group that truly cared for not only its own and for those outside. When plagues swept through the Empire, Christians ministered to everyone. The Christian *habitus* was so confident about itself that it could defy authority even when such authority clashed with its beliefs. Those with the Christian *habitus* could show patience instead of anger in the face of direct challenge.

Christians could be fearless because they trusted the God of the universe and could wait for God to act. In a nutshell, the Christian *habitus*

was the practice of Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount. So, how did the early church teach this kind of *habitus*? According to Kreider, a third factor in Christian growth was the church's *catechesis and worship*. Catechesis involved a very long process whereby the inner life of the candidate was reformed into the likeness of Christ. Baptism came at the end of this process that could last as long as three years. Christians realized early on that their dropout rate was unacceptably high, so they devised a plan to take character formation seriously. They knew that Roman society had ingrained in people habits of impatience and violence. They knew that it would take time for people to develop an inner habit of patience. They realized that converts would need mentors and community support to develop the patient lifestyle that was normative for Christians. As a result, they crafted a very deliberate catechesis. When someone expressed interest in Christianity, that person had to find a sponsor who would take them to catechetical classes. The bishop interviewed the sponsor to see if the candidate was ready to begin instruction.

The mentor then attended the weekly classes with the catechumen. They did this for as long as three years, as the catechumen learned the new Christian *habitus*. The catechesis did not dwell as much on doctrine and ideas as on developing new patterns of living. At the end of the process, the sponsor was interviewed again by the bishop to see if the candidate exhibited this new patient lifestyle. Then the sponsor and the catechumen attended forty daily sessions preparing the catechumen for actual baptism. The night before their baptism, the catechumens fasted and prayed all night long. After the baptism, they continued to attend daily sessions for the following week. Only after their baptism were the new converts allowed to attend the worship service and participate in the Lord's Supper.

According to Kreider, once the catechumens had completed the process, they were ready to live a new life characterized by patience. This new life was energized by worship and the Eucharist, which enabled them to successfully meet opposition and persecution. Kreider points to this entire catechetical process as the reason Tertullian could say that Christians were made, not born.

The numerical growth of the church, according to Kreider, was not a consideration for the early church. Their focus instead was on the personal development of patience, and it was the display of patience before the watching world that proved most attractive to those outside the church.

The fourth additional factor Kreider highlights as important for the growth of the early church is the process of *fermentation*, though he acknowledges that early Christian authors did not depict it in such terms.

The growth of the church was slow, natural, unpredictable, uncoordinated, and unstoppable. Origen called it "God's invisible power." It was an energy that bubbled up from the inner life of the Christian, and was not under human control. In addition, there was no way that humans could speed it up.

Kreider also points out that this process of ferment was primarily driven by women. He suggests that the early Christian movement was a women's movement, though he does not develop this idea in an extended way.

One of Kreider's previous books dealt with *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Trinity Press, 1999). Covering some of the same ground, he notes that with Constantine the understanding of patience changed, the catechetical process changed, and the ferment no longer occurred. He argues that Constantine in himself is an example of this change. The emperor wanted to become a Christian, but refused to undergo catechesis. He was so impatient that the bishops refused to baptize him. One story illustrates why the bishops were concerned. The emperor heard rumors that his son was seeking to overthrow him so he murdered both his son and his wife before he learned that the rumors were probably false. His impatience resulted in their death. In the end, Constantine accepted catechesis, though only a truncated version of it, was baptized, and died a few months later. As the empire and church merged, many now saw great personal benefits to becoming a Christian. So many people flocked to the churches that they became overwhelmed. With such large numbers to catechize, the process of catechesis becomes short, formal, and primarily doctrinal. The church lost its interest in developing patience in the lives of its converts. As a result, Christians become indistinguishable from the people in the culture that surrounded them.

Kreider uses Augustine's treatment of patience to show how much the idea of patience changed. For Augustine, intentions were more important than *habitus*. He encouraged the aristocratic Roman Volusian to become a Christian because he would not have to change his *habitus*. Augustine assures Volusian that if the disposition of his heart is to love another person, then his execution of punishment can have "a certain kind of harshness" in its exterior actions. In addition to separating disposition from behavior, Augustine also relegated the virtue of patience primarily to monks and clerics, not laypeople (p. 291). The result was that the Christian church came to advance the gospel with impatient, forceful actions, all the while claiming that they were animated by loving intentions (p. 294). Kreider argues that the church ceased to value patient ferment and came instead to value impatient force (p. 296).

It should be apparent that Kreider's book is not just a history of the idea of patience in the early church. It is also a book with explicit missiological implications. Kreider suggests that church congregations that focus on developing patient people in an impatient world will discover that those outside the church will find its distinctive way attractive. One implication of Kreider's ideas is that evangelistic campaigns, exhortations to witness, and highly organized systems of outreach will be less important in a church focused on the process of developing the virtue of patience in the life of its members.

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The Christian College and the Meaning of Academic Freedom: Truth-Seeking in Community, by William C. Ringenberg. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 234 pp. + 39 pp. notes + 30 pp. bibliography + 15 pp. index. ISBN 978-1-137-39832-1. Hardcover, US\$100.00.

I purchased this book recently because I saw that George M. Marsden, a prominent historian of American religion and author of *The Soul of the American University* (Oxford, 1996), recommended it (and wrote the foreword). I was glad that I did because it gave me new insights, by a scholar who hails from the Anabaptist tradition, about this whole notion of academic freedom. The author observes that "an emphasis upon academic freedom most often comes with the intellectual and financial maturing of an institution" (p. 89). Seventh-day Adventists, who prize both Adventist education and religious liberty, would do well to pay attention to this helpful book.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first section highlights Christian values as context for the idea of academic freedom (pp. 1-53). Next is an overview of academic freedom in America (pp. 55-128). Finally, this is followed by a series of case studies that "test the limits" (pp. 129-230).

From the outset, argues Ringenberg, that the "primary difference" between a Christian versus a secular institution of higher learning "is less that of methodology than that of worldview" (p. xvi). Each should be open and search for truth. Thus, methodologically, there should be "no difference between the Christian college instructors and the secular