

L Clarence Jordan Lines of Transmission

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Clarence Jordan

Koinonia Founder
1912 - 1968
Georgia

Life Lines

Lines of Transmission: Influences and Mentors



fleeing persecution, from medieval Europe to Russia to the Dakotas, Montana, and Canada in a centuries-long pilgrimage; the Bruderhof, begun in Germany in 1920 by Eberhard Arnold as a community of love and brotherhood, had migrated to England, to Paraguay, and to New York State, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut in a much briefer period. One consequence of the contact with these groups was a challenge to the concept of community held by the Koinonians.

Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology by James William McClendon, Jr. pg 94 and 107.

◆To a friend: “Let me say that you are right about my being thrilled at the first contact with the Bruderhof. Immediately I saw in them a sister community, produced by the same spirit.

The Cotton Patch Evidence 102

How did Clarence come to Gospel Nonviolence?

◆Racial injustice, witnessed with his own young eyes on a regular basis, aroused Clarence’s compassion. He noticed the men in the chain gang behind his house in the jail yard were nearly all black. He heard their painful groans when they were tortured. He knew the one doing the torturing had only hours earlier been with him at church singing reverently. As Clarence grew he knew the injustice of racism and greed was behind the events he witnessed. These experiences opened Clarence to the Truth of Gospel Nonviolence. He acted with certainty years later in college.

The Cotton Patch Evidence, 8-10

◆The first two years of college required ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps). But Jordan volunteered for the last two years. After he finished his agriculture studies he went to six weeks of summer camp.

“But now that he was about to complete the program, he was beginning to be confused by what seemed to be two distinct compulsions vying for his commitment. It had not occurred to him previously that what he was reading in the New Testament and what he was training to do were in conflict.”

“Now Clarence Jordan mounted on a bold black steed, a pistol in one hand and a saber in the other, was the fulfillment of a mysterious compulsion common to most sons of southern aristocracy.

“But something new was tugging at him now. As he had grappled with his earlier conviction about the evils of racial oppression, and then the urge to preach, he had approached the Scripture with fresh fascination. In fact, he had been memorizing long passages of Scripture that were particularly meaningful to him, primarily in chapters five, six, and seven in the Gospel of Matthew—commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount.

Later to a friend Clarence said, “The class that day was a drill held on the edge of the woods. It was a mounted drill and I was on horseback. We were supposed to gallop through the woods with our pistols and sabers. We were to shoot our pistols at the cardboard dummies and stick the straw dummies with our sabers. Every time I would shoot at one of those cardboard dummies, that verse, ‘But I say unto you, love your enemies. . .’ would flash through my mind. I tried to swap places in my mind, where I would be the dummy and he would be the one on the horse. At that moment I saw the conflict between the mind of Jesus and the mind of the commanding officer. It was crystal clear that this Jesus was going one way and I another. Yet I called myself his follower.”

“When Clarence broke out into the open on the other side of the woods, his choice seemed clear to him. He dismounted, approached the commanding officer, and announced he was resigning his commission.”

“. . . The officer suggested sympathetically that Clarence become a chaplain.

“I told him,” Clarence said, “that that would be worse than ever. I could not encourage someone else to do what I myself would not do.” *The Cotton Patch Evidence*, 10-13.

◆Clarence Jordan came to accept Gospel Nonviolence through reading the New Testament and reflecting on his life experiences. In his biography of Clarence Jordan, James Wm McClendon, Jr. summed up Clarence’s experience. “He could not both believe the Sermon on the Mount, which he had been memorizing, and be a soldier; he could not both love his enemies and slash them with that long saber by his side.”

Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology pg.92

◆Clarence Jordan was invited by Martin Luther King to give 3 lectures in Montgomery when King was Pastor at Dexter Church on the Kingdom of God.

◆“Having studied Rauschenbusch recently I believe Clarence was very much influenced by him through his friend Henlee Barnette (author of Clarence Jordan: Turning Dreams into Deeds.” (From email contact with David Castle of Koinonia Farm, 2008.)

◆When Koinonia Farm began, its founders had no contact with, and little knowledge of, other intentional communities. Soon, however, such knowledge and contacts began. Two larger and older fellowships, the Hutterian communities and the Society of Brothers (Bruderhof), interchanged ideas and members with Koinonia during the fifties. Both of these, like Koinonia, were Christian: the Hutterites were Anabaptists who had journeyed,