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Global Mennonite Peacebuilding:
Exploring Theology, Culture, and Practice

Edited by Jeremy M. Bergen, Paul C. Heidebrecht, and Reina C. Neufeldt

PART II: PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVE PROFILES

Acknowledgments

Exploring Theological, Practical, and Cultural Dimensions of Global Mennonite Peacebuilding

Jeremy M. Bergen, Paul C. Heidebrecht, Reina C. Neufeldt

The Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival (GMP hereafter) was held June 9 through 12, 2016, at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. The event brought together people who speak about, write on, and pursue peacebuilding globally from an Anabaptist/ Mennonite perspective, and generated new conversations that otherwise might be separated by roles, academic disciplines, or areas of focus. Planning for the event, several years in the making and co-chaired by Marlene Epp and Reina Neufeldt, drew in many people, including colleagues from other Mennonite institutions. Some 203 people attended the conference and festival, coming from twenty countries in Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America. There were several plenaries, thirty-three concurrent sessions, a banquet, a play, a music concert, six art exhibits, several worship services, and conversation cafés.

This special edition of *The Conrad Grebel Review* offers a window into some of the thoughtful offerings that were part of the GMP. It includes articles employing material presented at the conference that have subsequently been peer-reviewed and edited. It also offers brief profiles of peacebuilding initiatives presented at the event (but not otherwise researched, analyzed, or peer-reviewed—a rare format for academic journals to employ). The overall goal of the articles and the profiles is to contribute to scholarship and reflection on global Mennonite peacebuilding.

In this introduction, we first reflect on the conference itself—its purpose, structure, and participants—as the structure was intended to reflect key aspects of Mennonite peacebuilding practice. We then introduce and review the contributions included in this issue. After drawing out some of the unique contributions made by the material in this volume, we suggest

future directions for scholarship and practice.

GMP Background: Purpose, Structure, Participants
Why hold a conference or festival on global Mennonite peacebuilding? After all, at least two dedicated volumes have already been published on the peacebuilding and conflict transformation work carried out by this faith tradition, and ongoing conversations on peacebuilding and peacemaking can be found in various venues, including the Mennonite World Conference and peacebuilding institutes hosted by Mennonite educational institutions.[1] What, then, was GMP's purpose? How did the structure reflect that purpose? Who came, and what did the conference contribute to our understandings of global Mennonite peacebuilding?

Intriguingly, prior to 2016 there had not been a gathering quite like this one, with its purposive engagement of multiple audiences, subjects, and perspectives under the umbrella of peacebuilding. Organizers stated their aspirations in the initial call for proposals as follows:

> This conference and festival will bring together academics, practitioners, artists, and church workers from around the world, to dialogue and reflect on Mennonite peacebuilding accomplishment, failures, challenges, and opportunities in varied international settings, past and present. Its purpose is: to explore traditions and contemporary expressions of Anabaptist/Mennonite peace beliefs and practices; to bring together academics and practitioners to learn from each other; to give expression to peacebuilding ideals through the arts; and to assess and re-envision Mennonite peacebuilding practice.

The intention was to bring people together to talk across lines that sometimes unintentionally divide, and this required broad consultation and careful consideration. An international advisory committee provided

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[1] Volumes on Mennonite peacebuilding include Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach, eds., *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000); Andrew P. Klager, ed., *From Suffering to Solidarity: The Historical Seeds of Mennonite Interreligious, Interethnic, and International Peacebuilding* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

helpful input and feedback along the way.[2]

Each word in the title of the event spoke to a particular part of its purpose. First, the intent was to hear from people who engage with, work on, support, theorize, envision, narrate, or enact peacebuilding around the globe. This was to be a *global* event. Second, GMP would focus on one religious tradition, *Mennonite* or Anabaptist/Mennonite, with reflections offered by people who self-identify with this tradition, by friends and partners who work with Mennonites, or by others rooted in Mennonite peacebuilding models.[3] Third, the term *peacebuilding* was chosen to describe the broad array of activities that Mennonites have pursued in order to bring about peace. We recognized that Mennonites have historically prioritized words like nonresistance, pacifism, nonconformity, and peacemaking,[4] but using the term "peacebuilding" highlighted the practitioner dimension of GMP. It also reflected the current state of scholarship that regards peacebuilding as an active, ongoing process of conflict transformation which occurs at different points and in different ways within and across a conflict spectrum.[5] Finally, the event was described as both a *conference* and a *festival* in order to signal a desire to include artistic as well as academic and practitioner voices. Planners did not want the event to be purely cerebral, and wanted to make space to engage in, and with, peace through all the senses.[6]

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[2] This committee included representatives from the Peace Commission of the Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

[3] We recognize that the label "Mennonite" is restrictive, and in most of our documentation for GMP we used the phrasing "Anabaptist/Mennonite" to indicate an intent to include Brethren in Christ and other groups that understand themselves to be Anabaptist but not Mennonite. We retained "Mennonite" in the title because of its continued broad use and recognition in the literature related to peacemaking and peacebuilding. However, this may have limited attendance and participation by people who identify as Anabaptist but not Mennonite.

[4] Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994).

[5] Peacebuilding, as defined in the literature, refers to actions undertaken before, during, or after a conflict to address deep-rooted structural and relational causes of conflict, as well as actions that mitigate the effects of conflict. See John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005); John Paul Lederach and R. Scott Appleby, "Strategic Peacebuilding: An Overview," in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, ed. Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

[6] One fear was that the word "festival" might suggest that we wanted to celebrate and laud

Response to the GMP call for proposals was substantial. The program committee received 180 submissions for consideration, and selected 82 to be included as workshops, individual papers clustered on panels, group roundtable discussions, and artistic exhibits. This meant that, as with many conferences, there were too many concurrent sessions for any one person to attend. Organizers sought to counter this challenge by privileging multiple voices, including artistic performances, and by building in conversation and attention to a deliberate learning agenda on Anabaptist/Mennonite peacebuilding.[7]

A common thread in Mennonite peacebuilding is an emphasis on grassroots efforts and concomitantly engaging multiple voices. GMP planners decided that this was an important ethos to build into the conference structure beyond concurrent sessions and exhibits. This meant that all the plenaries intentionally featured multiple voices engaged in or with Mennonite peacebuilding. We strove to avoid privileging any one particular voice, profession, affiliation, or geographic location. This meant we had three opening plenary speakers from three different continents, four morning storytellers, and a facilitated conversation on giving up privilege and pursuing decolonization for the banquet program. Finally, it meant a commitment to ensure that the conference program was fully available in Spanish and French, and that interpretive services were offered for Spanish-speakers throughout.

Serendipitously, the evening artistic performances that were part of the festival also featured multiple voices. The music concert, *Voices for Peace*, premiered a composition called "Earth Peace" by Carol Ann Weaver. This work drew together stories about peacebuilding and the environment. It also featured the Grebel Balinese Gamelan, the University of Waterloo

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all that Mennonites have done, when we are fully cognizant there are problems and failures, and that much peacebuilding work occurs in settings of deep violence and pain—the idea of a celebration then seems misplaced. In the call for papers we noted explicitly a desire to learn from failures and challenges. Yet, partly because we could come up with no better term to signal the intention to include the arts, "festival" remained in the title to counter-balance any dry connotations of the word "conference."

[7] The full program and further details are available on the GMP website—https://uwaterloo. ca/grebel/events/global-mennonite-peacebuilding-conference-and-festival.

Choir, the Factory Arts string quartet, and soprano Stephanie Kramer.[8] On Saturday evening, Theatre of the Beat premiered the play *Yellow Bellies*, an exploration of several stories of conscientious objectors in Canada during World War II. The aural and visual modalities opened space to imagine and explore the nuanced dimensions and emotions in Mennonite experiences of peacebuilding. Drum circles welcomed participants on two occasions, one to the conference itself and one to the Friday banquet. The circles were part of a spiritual welcome and acknowledgment of the land upon which Conrad Grebel University College is located, the traditional territory of the Neutral (Attawandaron), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples, and part of the Haldimand Tract. Yet the beating of the drum and songs of welcome also enabled participants to hear and learn, in a different register, about current challenges in addressing Canada's history of colonialism.

Finally, grafted into the structure of GMP was a learning agenda. The spirit of this agenda was nurtured through afternoon conversation cafés following the concurrent sessions, and through a listening team composed of "surprising pairs." Five questions, developed in consultation with advisory group member John Paul Lederach, guided the conversations: Who are Anabaptist/Mennonite peacebuilders? What do we do? What has changed over time? With what do we struggle? Where are we going? The listening team members spread out over the conference, and drew together their observations in visual and oral form during the closing plenary. Responses to these questions, from the cafés, student recorder notes, and listening team members, appear in "Reflections and Gleanings: A Learning Document of the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival."[9]

Who presented and who came? The GMP aspired to be global, and it met this aspiration, albeit with significant limitations. The majority of participants were local; most held Canadian citizenship (141 of 203 participants or 69 percent). Of the 62 participants who joined from outside Canada, 30 (15 percent) were US citizens; several individuals came from

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[8] Two short excerpts from the concert are available for viewing at https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/global-mennonite-peacebuilding-conference-and-festival/multimedia.

[9] Compiled by Chinenye Bolaji Chukwuma-Nwuba, Reina Neufeldt, Marlene Epp, Listening Team members, and Conversation Café Team members, with layout by Aurrey Drake. June 2017. Available at https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/sites/ca.grebel/files/uploads/files/gmp_booklet_final_2.pdf.

Colombia (4 percent), India (2 percent), and the Netherlands (2 percent). A significant disappointment was that 15 international participants were unable to attend because of visa challenges or other problems. It is noteworthy that of the presenters who did make it to Waterloo for concurrent sessions, 57 percent were men and 43 percent were women.[10] This is a positive signal that formal discussions of peace in Mennonite circles will no longer be male-dominated.

It was heartening to see a broad range of professional profiles among attendees. Moreover, many presenters in concurrent sessions were identifiable by multiple labels, including academics and practitioners, church workers, formal mediators, or other professionals such as writers, artists, and musicians. A rough coding of contributors' primary professional identity suggests that the presenters included 50 academics, 27 development and peacebuilding practitioners, 25 church activists, and 11 persons with other professional backgrounds, including writers and musicians.[11]

This CGR Volume
Though the present volume must be understood as emerging from a particular event, it stands on its own as a contribution to written discourse about global Mennonite peacebuilding. It is neither a "conference proceedings" nor a truly representative sampling of presentations. All presenters were invited to submit manuscripts for review, and many more were submitted than could be included. In addition to criteria such as clarity and originality, we gave priority to papers that engaged the three realities—"global," "Mennonite," and "peacebuilding." The result, we believe, is a volume that constitutes multi-disciplinary conversations among scholars, practitioners, and artists about the past, present, and future of global Mennonite peacebuilding.

In general, this volume includes two types of articles. Part I comprises scholarly articles that emerged from presentations at the conference. Some are traditional scholarly pieces engaged with textual sources. These articles, grounded in such disciplines as theology, biblical studies, history, peace and

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[10] This assessment is based on presenting gender, and does not represent a nuanced assessment of gendered identities at the conference.

[11] This tally does not include plenary speakers unless they also presented in a concurrent session, nor does it include performers in the evening concert or play.

conflict studies, and literary criticism, generally exhibit an appreciation of the beliefs and practices that inform Mennonite peacebuilding, but they also identify substantial criticisms, gaps, and patterns that undermine peace. Other articles are more reflective in tone, engaged in analysis and rumination on peacebuilding initiatives or personal experiences, or both, yet are also constructive and critical. The contributions by Rhonda Harder Epp and Lisa Schirch explicitly integrate visual art.

Part II consists of Peacebuilding Initiative Profiles. These short, invited contributions come from presenters who describe one Anabaptist/ Mennonite-related peacebuilding initiative or program, and highlight lessons learned from implementing the initiative. We had expected that Part I would include more articles written by practitioners reflecting on projects with which they have been involved, but in the end we received many more submissions from people working in theology, biblical studies, and history. The inclusion of the Peacebuilding Initiative Profiles in Part II thus helps us present a broader picture of realities on the ground, as well as points of departure for reflecting theologically and practically on the capacity such initiatives to build peace and to re-shape Mennonite understandings of peace witness. Among the many gaps in this volume, we acknowledge that none of the articles or profiles explicitly addresses peacebuilding in the context of Indigenous-Settler relations in North America, although this topic featured prominently in the program.[12]

Insights on Global Anabaptist/Mennonite Peacebuilding Theology and Practice

The contributions in this volume add to an understanding of Mennonite peace theology and peacebuilding practice, and they engage with different, sometimes overlapping literatures, on Mennonite peacebuilding, as we will discuss briefly here.

In a formative study of Anabaptist/Mennonite peacebuilding, *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding,* Quaker anthropologist Sally Engle Merry offers a cultural analysis of Mennonite

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[12] Resources on this theme include Steve Heinrichs, ed., *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2013), and special issues of the periodical *Intotemak*, published by Mennonite Church Canada.

mediation and peacebuilding. She observes that "Mennonite religious faith, conceptions of community, and theories of social justice shape the practices of Mennonite peacebuilding."[13] She proceeds to identify a series of concepts and practices that seem to guide Mennonite approaches, which Christopher Mitchell and Marc Gopin echo and expand upon in the same volume as external observers of Mennonite peacebuilding.[14] In the present volume, we see not only continuities of these practices and themes, but also new perspectives that question, deepen, or offer a rethinking of the usual norms and practices.

Anabaptist/Mennonite commitments to building relationships and "standing with" people in conflict settings were hallmark features noted by Merry. More recent work has contributed the idea of "empathetic solidarity," which suggests Mennonite peacebuilding is marked by historical experiences of exclusion and being targets of violence.[15] The strong commitment to solidarity continues to be prominent in peacebuilding work and evidenced in the present volume. It comes through particularly in the Peacebuilding Initiative Profiles, such as the activity in Nigeria, Colombia, and Bangladesh. It also appears in Peter Sensenig's analysis of Mennonite peacebuilding in predominantly Muslim contexts in East Africa.[16] Additionally, it is manifest in the article by Alain Epp Weaver, who questions the expression of a core religious commitment, pacifism, as part of standing with those in conflict. When Mennonite commitments to nonviolence result in a quiet smugness, which he names as "triumphant pacifism," they undermine efforts at being in relationship with those in conflict. In this way, Epp Weaver's article helps expand and uncover a tension in Mennonite peacebuilding that is linked to its firm religious foundation. As Merry and Gopin noted in 2000, while

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[13] Sally Engle Merry,"Mennonite Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation: A Cultural Analysis," in *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding*, ed. Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 203.

[14] Marc Gopin, "The Religious Component of Mennonite Peacemaking and Its Global Implications," in *From the Ground Up*, 233-55; Christopher Mitchell, "Mennonite Approaches to Peace and Conflict Resolution," in *From the Ground Up*, 218-32.

[15] Janna Hunter-Bowman, "From Resolution to Transformation," in Klager, *From Suffering to Solidarity*, 115-39.

[16] The interfaith context of some Mennonite peacebuilding is notably developed in Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver, eds., *Borders and Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House; Scottdale, PA; Herald Press, 2007).

Mennonite peacebuilders were often humble and exhibited an extraordinary amount of cross-cultural sensitivity, their commitment to their particular religious beliefs and traditions at times contradicted their commitment to cultural sensitivity, and had the potential to lead to exclusion or unhelpful pressures on people to convert ideologically.[17] Epp Weaver illustrates how this contradiction occurs, and points to the need for careful deliberation on how values and theological convictions shape peacebuilder responses.

In 1991, the Peace Office of Mennonite Central Committee published a booklet entitled *Mennonite Peace Theology: A Panorama of Types.* That document provided a descriptive typology of various approaches to peace theology, including "historic nonresistance" represented primarily by Guy F. Hershberger, the "pacifism of the Messianic community" as developed by John Howard Yoder, the "realist pacifism" of Duane Friesen, the "social responsibility" approach of J. Lawrence Burkholder, and the "nonviolent statesmanship" of Gordon Kaufman, among others. While their own experiences undoubtedly shaped the convictions of proponents of specific types, the booklet categorized ways of thinking about being in the world rather than reflecting on actual practices on the ground. Many authors in *Panorama* may see their work as prophetic, in that they are calling for (Mennonite) communities of faith to view God, the church/world relationship, and Christian discipleship in certain ways. They are commending their constituencies to embody a vision of faithful peaceableness. Thus, John Howard Yoder's account of the practices of peace both within the church and beyond may be taken not simply as descriptive of Mennonite churches but as a call to Mennonites and other Christians to live up to them. The work of biblical scholars such as Willard Swartley and Perry Yoder, and of theologian J. Denny Weaver, may also be understood in this way.[18]

While a vigorous theological discourse about peace is vital, several

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[17] Merry, "Mennonite Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation," 215; Gopin, "The Religious Component of Mennonite Peacemaking and Its Global Implications," 254.

[18] See especially Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1987); J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); J. Denny Weaver, *God Without Violence: Following a Nonviolent God in a Violent World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

authors in this GMP volume engage with its limitations. Jennifer Otto responds to the sweeping generalizations that Mennonites have made about the apparent pacifism of the church prior to Constantine, claims that fit a narrative about continuity between early Christianity and Anabaptism but do not do justice to the historical record. Kimberly Penner criticizes the ways that an idealized self-perception of peace churches has often blinded these churches to forms of violence within their communities, including violence against women. She identifies ways that peace theology itself has masked particular arrangements of power that harm, and sketches new directions for a more just and holistic approach. Tom Yoder Neufeld warns against taking just one strand of the biblical witness as normative for peace, and rather recommends a deeper engagement with the wide diversity of voices in the Bible, an orientation that he argues must be in constant, vigorous conversation with the increasing array of practical approaches to peacebuilding.

Mark Jantzen and Grace Kehler address the complexities and contradictions in Mennonite peacebuilding from historical and literary perspectives respectively. Janzen explores the circumstances in which some Prussian Mennonites dropped their historic commitments to nonresistance. Kehler's analysis of Miriam Toews's novel *All My Puny Sorrows* exhibits the violence that lurks within supposedly pacifist Mennonite communities.

In recent decades, there have been concerted efforts to connect the theological, biblical, and ethical discourses of Mennonite peace theology with the experience and reflection of peace practitioners, peace educators, and concrete peacebuilding initiatives.[19] This was a primary objective of a project that resulted in the edited volume *At Peace and Unafraid*,[20] in scholarly engagement with the work of specific peacebuilding organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC),[21] and in discussions of

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[19] J. Robert Charles, "The Varieties of Mennonite Peacemaking: A Review Essay," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76 (2002): 105-19; J. Denny Weaver and Gerald J. Mast, eds., *Teaching Peace: Nonviolence and the Liberal Arts* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Gayle Gerber Koontz, "Peace Theology in Transition: North American Mennonite Peace Studies and Theology, 1906-2006," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 81 (2007): 77-96.

[20] Duane K. Friesen and Gerald Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security and the Wisdom of the Cross* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005).

[21] Alain Epp Weaver, ed., *A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding*

contentious issues such as policing and the responsibility to protect.[22] The GMP event was itself premised on the assumption that peace theology and peace practice should not be separate silos but mutually informing and challenging discourses. While an earlier mode of peace theology assumed that one sorted out one's views of God, Jesus, church, world, and then lived accordingly, voices such as Epp Weaver's and others draw attention to how experiences on the ground shape not only peace practices but also conceptions of who God is and how God acts.

Mennonite peace theology has also developed in the past seventy years through various levels of ecumenical engagement. Earlier conversations among historic peace churches were primarily theological and European/ North American in orientation,[23] while more recent engagements include global and practitioner perspectives.[24] Beyond the historic peace churches, the ecumenical contacts and writings of John Howard Yoder, conversations stimulated by bilateral dialogues involving Mennonites and Catholics,[25] and the work of Mennonite theologian and ecumenist Fernando Enns are significant.[26] The article in this volume by Fernando Enns and Andréas

Networks of Mennonite Identity (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2011); *The Mennonite Central Committee at 90: Case Studies and Perspectives*, theme issue, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2011). The *Peace Office Newsletter*, published by MCC from 1998 to 2012, contains substantial theological reflection on practical issues raised by MCC's work.

[22] *Mennonites and Policing: An Ongoing Conversation*, theme issue, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2008); *The International Criminal Court and the Responsibility to Protect*, theme issue, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2010); Gerald W. Schlabach, ed., *Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

[23] Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *On Earth Peace: Discussions on War/Peace Issues between Friends, Mennonites, Brethren and European Churches 1935-1975* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1978); Douglas Gwyn et al., *A Declaration on Peace: In God's People the World's Renewal has Begun: A Contribution to Ecumenical Dialogue* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991).

[24] Fernando Enns, Scott Holland, and Ann K. Riggs, eds. *Seeking Cultures of Peace: A Peace Church Conversation* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2004); Donald E. Miller, ed., *Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007); Donald E. Miller, Gerard Guiton, and Paulus Widjaja, eds., *Overcoming Violence in Asia: The Role of the Church in Seeking Cultures of Peace* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2011).

[25] For example, Gerald Schlabach and Margaret R. Pfeil, eds., *Sharing Peace: Mennonites and Catholics in Conversation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

[26] Fernando Enns, *The Peace Church and the Ecumenical Community: Ecclesiology and the*

Pacheco shows how ecumenical contacts have shaped and deepened peace church theology, just as peace church theology has prompted a broadening of the discourse of peace within the ecumenical movement and in other Christian traditions. Mennonites have much in common with many Christians—not only a commitment to seek peace but more basically the conviction that God's reality and agency in the world matters for all aspects of life, including peacebuilding. Moreover, as Mennonite peace theology has developed a more complex vocabulary for the complexities and ambiguities of peace, there is in turn greater potential for substantial, fruitful exchanges between theologians and the practitioners who have long recognized and worked within those complexities.

An important feature of Mennonite peacebuilding that Merry identified was a practice she termed "not taking charge."[27] It refers to a deliberate effort to avoid power. She identified this practice as a positive feature of Mennonite peacebuilding, one that focuses on Mennonites playing a background, facilitative role rather than stepping in and introducing processes from the outside or being strong-arm mediators. The theme of not being in charge has also emerged also in peace theology discourse. It may refer not only to the refusal to take charge in political or social settings but also to an epistemological humility that detects violence in attempts to seize control of knowledge.[28] More fundamentally, it is rooted in a trust in God's power and agency in the world, an agency epitomized by Jesus' self-giving love.

Several authors in this volume draw attention to blind spots that emerge from this practice of Mennonites disavowing, or claiming to disavow, particular kinds of human power. Lisa Schirch provocatively outlines how power affects conflicts within Mennonite communities, and how Mennonites

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Ethics of Nonviolence, trans. Helmut Harder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2007). Various World Council of Churches (WCC) initiatives, such as the Decade to Overcome Violence, reflect Enns's influence. See World Council of Churches, *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* (Geneva: WCC, 2011).

[27] Merry, "Mennonite Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation," 208-09.

[28] See Chris K. Huebner, *A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2006); John Howard Yoder, *A Pacifist Way of Knowing: John Howard Yoder's Nonviolent Epistemology*, ed. Christian Early and Ted Grimsrud (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

have tended to align themselves with external powerful structures (such as having their enemies defined by the state) that contribute to injustice and conflict. Tobin Miller Shearer examines the blind spot of Mennonite peacebuilding with respect to race, racism, and whiteness. Kimberly Penner does so with respect to violence against women within communities of faith.

At times, Mennonite peacebuilding work displays "keen attention to differences in social power and the forces that produce these differences" as part of confronting social inequality.[29] This is present in Geraldine Balzer's examination of how a service learning trip to Guatemala for high school students helps them understand the effects of colonialism and globalization. This initiative is part of one Mennonite secondary school's efforts to prepare students for a life of faith, service, and a commitment to building peace. At the same time, as Schirch and Miller Shearer point out, the many good intentions informing any peacebuilding practice must continually be re-examined.

Where to Go from Here?
Mennonite peace theology discourse has moved beyond traditional questions of non-participation in war to examining peace within a more holistic view of the nature of the church and its mission in the world. Similarly, the value of "not being in charge" may extend beyond discussion of whether Christians or Mennonites should hold certain high political offices to broader questions of how to embody vulnerability, openness to others, and deep humility. Peace theology is not only seeking to move from text and theory to practice, it is being challenged and reshaped by attending to blind spots and harm in actual practice, as well as by experiences of those engaged in practical peacebuilding work. These are areas well worth further examination and exploration.

At the same time, there may be a tension between the value of not being in control and greater attention to practice, especially if attention to best practice becomes a means of taking control. Theologically, the logic of not being in control is premised on trust in the reality and agency of God. Humans are not the only agents in any given situation, though they often speak and write as though this is the case. To raise this issue is not to imply

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[29] Merry, "Mennonite Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation," 211.

that God's presence can either be discerned on any "side" of a conflict (the danger of projection is perennial), or be in any way specified in advance. One key question emerging from the GMP and this volume is how the reality of God matters for Mennonite peacebuilding. This is not the same question as how *faith* in God matters, which attends to the human side of the equation, though indeed faith will be part of how the difference that the reality of God makes will be discerned. It is equally not a question that is necessarily particular to *Mennonite* peacebuilding. It is a basic question for Christians, and indeed for theists of other religious traditions who are engaged in the work of peace.[30]

In concluding this introduction, it seems fitting to return to the question of Why? Beyond articulating a rationale for the conference and festival, why do conversations about global Mennonite peacebuilding continue to matter? Would we answer this question differently either in light of the way the GMP event unfolded or in light of the outputs captured in this volume?

Judging from the level of interest, the diversity of participants, and the multiplicity of ongoing agendas celebrated by the GMP, much work remains and new challenges are certain to emerge. There is a strong interest among conference participants in continuing to gather and cultivate closer relationships. As well, there is more need than ever for critical reflection and renewed practices, and it is not too soon to begin dreaming about a follow-up event in the coming years. However, this raises the question as to who is best placed to carry this agenda forward in a sustained way. Are institutions of higher education able to convene conversations that fully address the needs of practitioners, church leaders, and artists, as well as academics? The contributions to this volume suggest that academic institutions bring scholarly strengths but also have limits. Perhaps the next time around, another kind of host should be encouraged to initiate the gathering. For example, could a globally representative organization, such as the Mennonite World Conference Peace Commission, marshal the resources to conduct such an undertaking? Might the proposed Global Anabaptist Peace Network

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[30] Developing better practices for evaluation of religious and interreligious peacebuilding is a current focus in peacebuilding assessment efforts, such as the "Effective Inter-religious Action in Peacebuilding" initiative of the Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium.

be a source for organizing it?

Another lesson from the GMP is that conversations about global Mennonite peacebuilding matter to more than just Mennonites. Countless partners and friends have been inspired by their interaction with Mennonite peacebuilders, and many Mennonites have been profoundly shaped by their interaction with peacebuilders beyond the Mennonite tradition. As these conversations continue in person and in print, we recommend further expansion of the range of voices and the agenda addressed.

Jeremy M. Bergen is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies, Director of Theological Studies, and Editor of The Conrad Grebel Review, *at Conrad Grebel University College. Paul C. Heidebrecht is Director of the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement, and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Conrad Grebel University College. Reina C. Neufeldt is Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Conrad Grebel University College.*

PART I

Peacebuilding Articles

Walls: Arbitrary Impediments/Green Lines

Rhonda Harder Epp

The cover artwork on this special issue of The Conrad Grebel Review *is by Rhonda Harder Epp, whose artist's statement appears below. Panel 5 of her* Green Line *paintings appears on the front cover, and panels 1-5 appear on the back cover. – Editors*

Walls became an obsession when I went to Berlin in 2010. I followed the path marking where the wall had been. I saw the few remaining sections of it. I heard about a couple from East Berlin who walked away from their apartment in 1961 with a picnic basket, hedging their bets that life would be better on the other side. After the wall came down in 1989, they were able to return to see their apartment. Nothing had changed. Their neighbors had moved in, but the furniture and even the pictures on the walls were the same. The Berlin Wall created a divide in aspiration, potential, security, prosperity, perspective, and culture—a divide that was not there before and that more than two decades has not completely erased.

There are several geo-political borders like the former Berlin Wall that are as impenetrable as people can make them: in Western Sahara, Ceuta, and Melilla; between India and Bangladesh, the US and Mexico, and Israel and the West bank; across Cyprus; and in Belfast, dissected with "defensive architecture." These are arbitrary lines. They are drawn by the more powerful side.

Walls, albeit not in material form, figure in our imaginations and speech. When we struggle to succeed, we can feel like we are "hitting our heads against a wall"; when someone or something bothers us, we say we are being "driven up a wall"; when we are excited, we are "bouncing off the walls"; when something is pervasive, it is "wall-to-wall"; when we will try everything possible, we will "go to the wall"; long-distance runners, energy flagging, can "hit a wall".

There is also every kind of emotional wall. The materials of these walls are hurt, fear, depression, depletion, inability to trust, insecurity, self-esteem, injury, misunderstanding. We build those walls one experience at a time.

The paintings in my Walls series are meditations on the idea of separation, arbitrariness, and emotional distress—our experience of being separated from our people, our land, or our deepest desires. I found that I tended to think in terms of release or escape: over, under, through, and around, as well as ladders, flight, windows, and doors. I worked at getting the feel of arbitrary separation. I thought about the things that stall our lives in frustration and unrequited dreams, preventing us from any progress at all as surely as a concrete wall. I wondered about the difficulties we encounter as individuals, as communities, and even as societies as we approach others with good but misaligned intentions. I painted and I made books. I ruminated and imagined. And maybe with the final panel of "Green Lines," the barbed wire unravelling, I came to a wishful resolution.

Green Lines

The 1949 armistice boundary between Israel and the West Bank was drawn on a map in green ink. Cyril Radcliffe, a British official, thus created the first "green line," which also became the internationally accepted border. The second green line cuts across Cyprus, cleaving its major city in half. In that case, another British official, another green line. That time the line was drawn with a green pencil, but it has been no less difficult to erase than ink. What is neat and clean on a map is messy and heart-rending for families and communities.

The panels of the *Green Line* paintings focus on the arbitrariness of these political divisions. Nothing about arbitrary action sits well with people, especially if they have been harmed and there is no redress. Panel 1 is a close-up of a green line, so close it is pixelated. What is within a line? Is it, in and of itself, something? Panel 2 applies a green line to divide my neighborhood; it divides my house from half my neighbors and cuts me off from the local grocery store. Panel 3 presents the worst situation I can think of: my home is separated by a no-man's land green line from my children's homes. Panel 4 looks for some redemption—ladders help overcome a fence. Panel 5 sees the barbed wire unravelling. Unrealistic, perhaps, but better worth working towards.

Rhonda Harder Epp is an artist living in Edmonton, Alberta. Visit www. rhondaharderepp.com.

Humility, Peacebuilding, and
the Limits of Christian Pacifism

Alain Epp Weaver

In early May 2016, the Reverend Qashisha Ephraim Ashur Alkhas, a priest in the Diocese of California of the Assyrian Church of the East, presented what he described as a story of interfaith peacebuilding to the National Council of Churches' annual Christian Unity Gathering. The story came from a village in Iraq's Ninewa (Nineveh) Plains. The Assyrian Church of the East, historically centered in what is now northern Iraq, northeastern Syria, southeastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran, boasts a long and rich history, tracing its origins to the first century CE and the missionary efforts of Saint Thomas the Apostle. Today, however, the Assyrian Church of the East, like other church communions in the region, confronts a serious threat to its continued existence in its native homeland, as Christians, Yazidis, and other minority religious groups face what they describe as genocide carried out by forces of the Islamic State group and other Islamist militias. "War came to them, genocide came to them," lamented Alkhas.[1]

Yet amidst this bleak reality, Alkhas identified hopeful signs of Christian-Muslim partnership. The interfaith collaboration that he highlighted as a sign of hope was born on the battlefield. As Islamic State militants advanced upon an Assyrian Christian village in northern Iraq this past year, they were met by the combined forces of three Assyrian Christian militias, militias formed by Assyrian Christians on the frontlines of the Islamic State's advances who seek to recapture and defend their native villages. Although outnumbered, the Assyrian Christian fighters nevertheless managed to hold off the Islamic State forces for hours, which was long enough for Kurdish Peshmerga reinforcements to arrive and secure the village's defense. For Alkhas, this war-zone collaboration between

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[1] Quotations from Reverend Alkhas come from notes I took while attending the National Council of Churches' Christian Unity Gathering, May 5-6, 2016 in Baltimore, Maryland as a representative of Mennonite Church USA.

mostly Sunni Muslim soldiers of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Assyrian Christian fighters offers a hopeful story of what he described as interfaith peacebuilding. Christians in the United States, he urged, should not "be prejudicial about the circumstances Assyrian Christians find themselves in," but should instead lift up in prayer their Assyrian sisters and brothers in Christ as they seek to defend their lives and their homeland from genocidal forces.

How can pacifist Mennonites—and other Christian proponents of "pacifism" or "nonviolence"—receive this story from Reverend Alkhas without their first reaction being the construction of pacifist rejoinders to the story, whether condemnations of the Assyrian Christian actions as embodying a neo-Constantinian or neo-neo-Constantinian betrayal of the gospel, or hurried efforts to insist on the imagined efficacy of some nonviolent response to the Islamic State's assaults on Assyrian Christian, Yazidi, and Kurdish villages?[2] Put another way: Can pacifist Mennonites, and pacifist Christians more broadly, have the humility to receive this story in silence, fear, and trembling? Can pacifist Christians avoid glibly pretending to have clear, nonviolent alternatives to offer Assyrian Christian fighters defending their communities, accepting the limits to pacifism to offer solutions to the world?[3]

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[2] John Howard Yoder differentiated among various types of "Constantinianism," which for him named the church's perennial temptation to abandon its identity as a nonconformed community by conflating its identity with some supposedly broader, more universal, community. See Yoder, "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 135-47. One way to frame my paper's argument is this: rejecting the Constantinian temptation will sometimes require silence from Christian pacifists, the relinquishing of the pretense of having nonviolent solutions to all situations.

[3] For the purposes of this paper, I use *pacifism* to refer to the position that it is always, in all circumstances, wrong to kill. Unlike the traditional *nonresistant* stance of Anabaptist communities in North America, *pacifism* includes an active search for and promotion of nonviolent alternatives to war and other violent measures. Historians have traced the shift within "mainstream" Anabaptist circles in North America from nonresistance to pacifism and nonviolence. See Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998); Ervin Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Peace Rhetoric, 1908-2008* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2011); and Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994). The organization for which I work,

To call for a humble recognition of the limits of Christian pacifism at this point in Mennonite history may well seem out of place. Anabaptist peacebuilding has grown and matured to the point that Conrad Grebel University College could hold a truly global conference on Mennonite peacebuilding in June 2016. Viewed from one angle, Christian pacifism is enjoying a moment of ascendancy, with Catholic theologians gathering at the Vatican to deliberate as to whether the church's just war doctrine should be rescinded.[4] Is this not a moment for Christian pacifist triumphalism, a proud embrace of the movement from nonresistant quietism to activism, and the confident espousal of nonviolent alternatives to war and of nonviolent responses to injustice?

My thesis is a basic one—perhaps too basic. Specifically, I want to sound a note of caution amidst any celebrations of Mennonite peacebuilding about the pitfalls of Christian pacifist triumphalism—and with it make a plea for a measure of humility regarding the power of nonviolent alternatives to war.[5] I say that this thesis may be too basic, because I grant that perhaps my worries about a triumphalist Christian pacifism are simply misplaced, and that my note of caution is an uninteresting repetition of commonly held assumptions.

Speaking confessionally, however, I know that I, at least, am prone to a triumphalist Christian pacifism, and I imagine that I am not alone in

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Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), has embodied and reflected this shift. In addition to "meeting basic human needs in the name of Christ," MCC supports partners around the world in promoting nonviolent alternatives to violent conflict and in building peace. My warnings of Christian pacifist triumphalism should not be interpreted as a critique of such efforts: I am a strong proponent of MCC's multifaceted peace witness. Yet, perhaps ironically, it has been through my active involvement in MCC's peacebuilding efforts that I have become convinced of Christian pacifism's limits.

[4] See "An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence," statement from the conference Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence held in Rome, April 11-13, 2016: www.paxchristi.net/sites/default/files/documentsappeal-to-catholic-church-to-recommit-to-nonviolence.pdf.

[5] I write here as a Christian pacifist to other Christian pacifists, arguing for a measure of humility about the limits of Christian pacifism to offer nonviolent alternatives to war. While I suspect that non-Christian pacifists—Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, secular, or other—may have similarly strong reasons for such humility, I do not presume that they face the same triumphalist temptation.

this. When Reverend Alkhas shared his story of interfaith peacebuilding, my instinctive reaction was to begin internally crafting a pacifist rejoinder to his valorization of Assyrian Christian fighters defending their homes. Then I caught myself. Why did I feel the need to contest his story, if only in my head? Why didn't I simply receive the story in silence?

As I have thought more about my initial reaction to Alkhas's story, I have reflected on my years of working with Mennonite Central Committee in Palestine and Israel. Specifically, I have found myself ruminating on how I would regularly encounter well-meaning visitors from Canada, the United States, and Europe whose words exhibited what I came to think of as a form of peace colonialism. Such short-term visitors routinely raised variations on the same questions: "Why haven't Palestinians tried nonviolence?" or "Where is the Palestinian Gandhi?" Such questions, it seemed to me, reflected an unwillingness or lack of readiness on the part of those asking the questions to immerse themselves in Palestinians' lives, to listen to and learn from Palestinians about their complex struggles.

These questions also betrayed an ignorance of the many forms of Palestinian nonviolent resistance against Israeli colonization over the past decades.[6] Such is the faith in the power of nonviolence among some of its proponents that the Palestinian failure to stem the unrelenting movement of Israeli colonization is taken as proof that nonviolence must not have been tried or that nonviolent efforts were flawed in some way. What cannot be countenanced is that there might not be clear, efficacious nonviolent responses to some situations. My answer, when faced by questions from privileged, white, North American Mennonites asking why Palestinians had not tried nonviolence was a politely couched version of: "Let's be silent for now and listen to the Palestinians you'll be meeting during your short time here." Yet, as I reflected on my initial reaction to Alkhas's story, I recognized a similar dynamic at play within myself, a need to articulate a nonviolent response to the grim realities the speaker described and an unwillingness

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[6] See, for example, Marwan Darweish and Andrew Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine: The History and Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2015); Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014); and Mary Elizabeth King, *A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Resistance* (New York: Nation Books, 2007).

simply to sit and listen.

Back to my thesis, this time stated more robustly: Humility about the limits of Christian pacifism means there will be some situations to which the proper Christian response is silence—not silence as mute indifference, but the silence of mourning and lament, silence as a wordless cry to God in the face of injustice, oppression, and the rule of death and destruction from which no obvious escape can be found.

Stating the thesis like this makes me anxious that this plea for a humble recognition of Christian pacifism's limits will be misunderstood. Thus I hasten to identify what this call for humility is *not*. I hesitated, for example, about starting these reflections with Alkhas's story for fear that, with its reference to genocide against Christians in Iraq and Syria, it would be misread as an implicit call for or endorsement of military action by US, Canadian, or European forces to stem the genocide. Indeed, within neo-conservative circles, urgent calls to stop the genocide of Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria go hand-in-hand with arguments for increased US military intervention. Yet this linkage is neither necessary nor inevitable. One can rightly raise concerns about armed humanitarian intervention masking neo-colonial interests. One can recognize what is happening to Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria as genocide while also joining critics like Andrew Bacevich and David Rieff, who express skepticism about the limits of US power, scathingly expose the horrific global damage wrought by the purportedly idealistic deployment of US military force, and argue against further US military interventionism, whether of the George W. Bush-Dick Cheney "bringing democracy to the Middle East" type or the Samantha Power/Anne-Marie Slaughter "responsibility to protect" variety.[7]

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[7] Few Mennonite pacifists have sympathy for pleas for armed intervention aiming to "bring democracy to the Middle East." Yet Mennonite theologians and peacebuilders have grappled with how to respond to or engage Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Will to Intervene (W2I) foreign policy doctrines that emerged in the wake of the Rwandan genocide. A crystallizing moment in Mennonite pacifist engagement with broader conversations about self-proclaimed humanitarian armed interventions came during the Somalia crisis of the early 1990s. See J.R. Burkholder and Ted Koontz, "Keeping our Calling Clear: When Armed Force Is Used to Make Relief Work Possible," *Gospel Herald,* January 12, 1993, 6-7; J. Lawrence Burkholder, "The Dark Side of Responsible Love," *Gospel Herald,* March 16, 1993, 6-7; J. Denny Weaver, "We Must

A silence borne out of a recognition that Christians may have no clear, efficacious nonviolent answers to particular situations is thus not the same as a loquacious confidence in the efficacy of war or other violent responses. Any critiques of Christian pacifism that chastise it for epistemological hubris, or for excessive confidence in the power of nonviolence to achieve particular outcomes, rebound more strongly on proponents of war and other violent responses, for they most certainly exhibit an excessive confidence and unwarranted optimism in US interventionism. Silence in the face of Christian pacifism's limits in offering nonviolent alternatives to all instances of injustice, oppression, and war thus need not entail the embrace, or even the tacit endorsement, of war.

Recognizing the limits of nonviolent action is also not a restatement in a different register of Niebuhrian realism. To acknowledge that Christian pacifists will sometimes not have nonviolent options to offer is not equivalent to arguing for or endorsing the use of violent force as part of the supposed burden of responsible action in the world. Similarly, an acknowledgment of Christian pacifism's limits need not lead to a retreat into quietism. To accept those limits is not to criticize the myriad ways that Mennonites have become actively engaged in building peace and transforming conflict. From pioneering work in restorative justice to nonviolent direct action, from diplomatic initiatives along various tracks to integrating conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding approaches into disaster response and sustainable development work, such peacebuilding efforts are well and good. They are rightly celebrated and should be expanded. Yet justifiable activism in working for peaceful transformation of violent conflict should not lure one into thinking there will always be nonviolent options at hand. Some

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Continue to Reject Just War Thinking," *Gospel Herald,* April 27, 1993, 6-8. I have previously drawn on the work of David Rieff and Andrew Bacevich in raising skeptical questions about any Christian pacifist endorsement of R2P and W2I: this essay extends that critical reflection. See Alain Epp Weaver and Peter Dula, "MCC, Humanitarianism, and Intervention," *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 13 (2005): 68-81, and Alain Epp Weaver, "On Not Being Ashamed of the Margins," *MCC Peace Office Newsletter* 42, no. 1 (January-March 2012): 10-12. See also Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Macmillan, 2008) and David Rieff, *At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

situations will bring Christian pacifists up short, and when that happens, silence will be preferable to the arrogant pretense of having solutions to offer.

    To acknowledge the limits of Christian pacifism, to humbly recognize that efficacious nonviolent responses to violent conflict are not always evident, has multiple benefits. First, such an acknowledgment helps Christian pacifists to avoid constructing triumphalist narratives of past nonviolent struggles. This in turn helps them to avoid whitewashing history, recognizing the past in all its rich complexity. Returning to my time in Palestine, I note that the same people who would ask why Palestinians had not tried nonviolence typically pointed to the civil rights struggle in the US as an example of successful nonviolent action. To be sure, there is a rich history of nonviolent struggle to learn from and celebrate in the civil rights movement. Yet in a triumphalist Christian pacifism, this history can become flattened, obscuring the multifaceted struggle by African Americans against white supremacy. Recent historical studies have sought to restore complexity to the history of the civil rights struggle by exploring the role played by weapons in resistance to the reign of whiteness.[8] Acknowledging such complex histories should not detract from the rich history of nonviolent action from which to learn.[9] Rather, such acknowledgment stands as a warning against overly simplified historical narratives that erase from view how armed and unarmed resistance are often intertwined, and that overpromise what nonviolence can deliver.

    A second benefit of recognizing the limits of Christian pacifism is that, for those of us of European descent, it can decenter us, reminding us that we are not at the center of God's reconciling work in the world. Such decentering can help us avoid the dangers of peace colonialism. I have previously explored such decentering within the historical development of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT).[10] CPT started out with a vision of

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[8] See Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Akinyele Umowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2014); and Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[9] See Erica Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2012).
[10] Alain Epp Weaver, "'Getting in the Way' or 'Being-With': Missiologies in Tension in the Work of Christian Peacemaker Teams," *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 19 (2011): 260-77.

Christian pacifists "getting in the way" by interposing themselves between warring parties. Yet, I argued, this missiological model of "getting in the way," often presented in the Pauline language of the battle against principalities and powers, has been in tension within CPT with the missiological model of "being-with," a model of prayer, fasting, and lamentation in solidarity with people pressed but not crushed by oppression and injustice. In the "getting in the way" model, missional agency is located primarily in the self-sacrificial (even heroic) activity of CPTers, while the "being-with" model reflects a concern about the limits of nonviolent direct action and positively values the 'being-with' of accompaniment. In this alternative model, the missional agency shifts from CPTers towards God's Spirit at work in the world, including in the people among whom CPTers live. More recently, CPT has moved to leave behind the "getting in the way" model. This move not only dovetails with a recognition of the limits of Christian pacifism but also represents the fruit of ongoing conversations about how to avoid peace colonialism.

I have gestured in these reflections towards a certain form of silence—a silence of mourning and lament. I will conclude, however, with a story of Christian speech in Iraqi Kurdistan that drives me back to silence. A reporter for SAT-7—a Christian, Arabic-language, satellite television station—was interviewing Christian refugees in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan who had been forcibly displaced from Qaraqosh in the Ninewa Plains. One refugee interviewed was Myriam, a ten-year-old girl, who had been driven from her home along with her family by Islamic State fighters. Asked by the reporter what her feelings were towards the people who had made her a refugee, she responded, "I won't do anything to them; I will only ask God to forgive them." Myriam's response went viral across the Middle East, viewed on YouTube over a million times.[11]

Here we have speech, not silence—the speech of forgiveness. But these words of forgiveness drive me back to silence, a silence of prayer in fear and trembling: a prayer of gratitude for the terrifying beauty of divine grace that breaks in through Myriam's witness; a prayer of confession that I fear I would not respond as Myriam did if my family faced what hers has; a prayer of lament that I as a Christian pacifist have limited, fractured ideas at best about how to halt the violent conflict that has left her and her family as refugees.

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[11] See www.sat7usa.org/child-forgives-isis.

Are Christian pacifists left, then, in the silence of mute indifference? Most definitely not. But Christian pacifists would do well, I suggest, to recognize that in some situations they will have no clear peacebuilding options to advance, no obvious nonviolent alternatives to offer—and that recognition can and should drive them to prayerful silence.

Alain Epp Weaver directs strategic planning for Mennonite Central Committee. He is based in MCC US's Akron, Pennsylvania office.

Mennonite Interfaith Peacebuilding in East Africa:
An Analysis of Current Involvement

Peter M. Sensenig

Two comments I have heard from East African Anabaptist Christians provide a backdrop for analyzing the current state of Muslim-Christian relations in the region. The first is from a Mennonite pastor in Ethiopia. Shepherding a church in a majority Muslim area of the country, he told me, "Muslims are our neighbors: we eat with them, we do business with them, we are like brothers and sisters." The second is from a Mennonite pastor in Tanzania: "How can we make peace with Muslims when they have no interest in peace, only in violence and conquest?" These two sentiments reflect the current reality of the Mennonite interface with Muslims in East Africa. On the one hand, there is neighborly affection, reinforced by shared histories, nationalities, communal life, and the best impulses of faith. On the other, competing goals, political tension, and violence erode the trust that has been built.

In taking stock of the relationship between Mennonites and Muslims in the region, we would be wise to pay special attention to areas where Mennonites have had a significant historical presence, which includes parts of most countries in East Africa and the Horn. In fact, the first, third, and fifth largest Anabaptist bodies in Africa are in the east, namely Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya respectively.[1] That the continent of Africa is home to the most members of Mennonite World Conference (more than a third), combined with the reality that many countries with the most Mennonites also have large numbers of Muslims, especially along the Swahili coast, means that East Africa is the site of some of the most significant Mennonite-

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[1] Mennonite World Conference Directory Statistics, www.mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/website_files/mwc_world_directory_2015_statistics.pdf. Baptized members are as follows: Ethiopia: 255,493; Democratic Republic of the Congo: 235,852; Tanzania: 65,456; Zimbabwe, 45,284; Kenya, 37,172.

Muslim "ecotones"[2] along with India and Indonesia.[3]

Of the North American Mennonite agencies, by far the one with the longest presence in East Africa is Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), which has had or continues to have sustained presence in the region, first in Tanganyika in 1934 and followed by Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Djibouti.[4] Later Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) joined the work in Somalia and Kenya, and now has personnel in most countries in the region. MCC has also had an important role in connecting Mennonite churches, hosting a regional meeting in 1962 in Kenya at the encouragement of Orie Miller, at that time executive secretary of both MCC and EMM.[5]

I live in Zanzibar, a 98 percent Muslim island off the coast of Tanzania, and work as a regional consultant for the Mennonite Board in Eastern Africa. In that capacity I travel and teach in Tanzania, Kenya, Somaliland, and Ethiopia. In this paper I offer a few comments and stories from each country about the Mennonite-Muslim relationship. I conclude with some observations about the challenges of interfaith engagement in this region, and a proposal for constructive collaboration going forward.

Somalia/Somaliland

The long Mennonite peacemaking presence in Somalia is a fascinating missiological saga: what happens when an agrarian Christian North American lineage-oriented people meets a nomadic Muslim East African lineage-oriented people? As it turns out, something very special: the formation of what I call a *peace clan*, consisting of people drawn together by their embrace of strangers and by taking on the identity of peacemaker.[6] This happened both for Somalis who studied in the Mennonite schools, and

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[2] A term borrowed from biology, referring to transition areas where communities can meet and may integrate.

[3] Mennonite World Conference Directory Statistics.

[4] John A. Lapp, "The Mennonite Engagement with Muslims: A Historical Overview," in *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims*, ed. James R. Krabill et al. (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2005), 97.

[5] Pakisa K. Tshimika and Doris Dube, "Introduction to Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches in Africa," in Alemu Checole et al., *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts. Global Mennonite History Series: Africa* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006), 12.

[6] Peter M. Sensenig, *Peace Clan: Mennonite Peacemaking in Somalia* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock/Pickwick, 2016), 230.

for Mennonites who wrestled for the first time with how to witness to the peace of Jesus in an entirely Islamic context. The broader changes within the Mennonite identity and theology impacted the approach in Somalia—from nonresistance to justice, from interfaith antagonism to interfaith dialogue and partnership.

But the reverse is also true: the Mennonite experience in Somalia impacted the Mennonite relationship to Muslims. This was especially true of two flashpoints in their shared history: the death of Merlin Grove in 1962 at the hands of an extremist Muslim, and the decision of the plain-suited Lancaster, Pennsylvania bishops in 1963 to allow the teaching of Islam in the Mennonite schools, as the Somali government demanded. The Mennonite and Somali clans converged, and both were changed both. Mennonite presence in Somalia and with Somalis continued through dictatorship, civil war, mass displacement, and the nearly total unraveling of Somali society. Yet, to this day Mennonites have a good name in Somalia, so that when my spouse and I moved to Hargeisa we were met by a former teacher and a former student of the one of the Mennonite schools who became our immediate advocates and treated us like their own children, and our son like their grandson, simply because we were Mennonites.[7]

The Mennonite presence of the past continues to bear fruit in the form of invitations to be involved in higher education in Somaliland, the autonomous northern region of Somalia. A partnership between Eastern Mennonite University and the University of Hargeisa resulted in the establishment of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. The Mennonite story in Somalia is one of coming and going, and the invitations keep coming—from Somaliland, from Puntland, from other areas. This posture of extraversion[8] has yielded some response: Mennonite teachers from EMM, from Elizabethtown College, and other individuals are involved in short-term language, peacebuilding, and trauma healing education.

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[7] The Mennonite reputation in Somaliland is rooted both in the educational work of EMM in southern Somalia (where some leaders in Somaliland studied) and in the MCC involvement in the peace process that led to the formation of independent Somaliland from 1991-93.

[8] Christina J. Woolner, "Teaching Modern Peace in Somaliland: Education and Extraversion in a Post-War De Facto State" (M.Phil. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2014).

Ethiopia

Neighboring Ethiopia has had a longstanding hostile relationship to Somalia. But some of MCC's work with partners in Ethiopia is with Somalis. MCC supports the Lutheran World Federation's work in the Dollo Ado refugee camp. MCC is also providing two years of support for the Ethiopia-based World Concern Maternal Child Health project in Somaliland.[9]

Most of the international Mennonite presence in Ethiopia has historically been in Orthodox Christian or traditional religion settings of the country, which is still the case for most of MCC's development projects. As a result of the rapid growth of both Islam and of the Meserete Kristos Church, an increasing number of congregations are located in majority-Muslim areas, particularly in the eastern and western regions of the country.

In a Master's course on Islam and Christianity at the Meserete Kristos College (MKC) outside Addis, I asked the students (mostly pastors, some in majority-Muslim areas) to locate themselves on a spectrum comprising specific questions about their identity in relation to Islam. For example, to the statement that Allah and the Parent of Jesus are the same person, students indicated: fully agree, fully disagree, or somewhere in between. Likewise the proposition that Yesu/Jesus is the same historical person as the prophet Issa. Or that Muslims who come to faith in Christ can continue to pray in the mosque and identify with Islamic culture on a range of issues. The students were overwhelmingly positive about Islamic faith and practice on most of these questions.

I detect at least two factors in play here. First, the proximity of Amharic to Arabic, as a fellow Semitic language, yields a sense of fraternal recognition. Second, significant intentional outreach by MKC-related individuals in Muslim neighborhoods has made sensitivity and creativity of utmost importance. I met students at the college who come from a Muslim background and are now seeking to witness to Jesus in their own communities, and are at the college looking for resources to do that.

Nevertheless, there are huge challenges. The politics of ethnicity, mixed with inter-religious conflict, is roiling Ethiopia as the federal government assigns greater power to nine regional ethnic states. There is also a history of political interreligious violence. One of my students, an MKC pastor, wrote

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[9] Laura and Ken Litwiller, MCC East Africa Area Directors, e-mail to author, May 28, 2016.

the following in an essay for the course:

> In 1990 my father went to the Orthodox Church to worship, and on his way home Muslim radicals slaughtered him in a harsh and merciless way. My father was 73 years old. As a result of this, my relatives developed an antagonistic spirit toward Muslims, and still now they are waiting for any opportunity to take revenge. It was a big temptation for me; my relatives expected me to stand with them to take vengeance upon the Muslims. However, I am a pastor who is preaching the gospel of peace, so how can I do this? . . . Unless we forgive, we can't share the word of God with Muslims.[10]

Evangelicals in Ethiopia have not always responded to this kind of violence with forgiveness. In fact, a visiting faculty member at the college, who had taken his training at another evangelical seminary in Ethiopia, sat in on one of my sessions. He objected strenuously to the nonviolent approach I was advocating, argued that the nonviolence of Christ is not relevant, and suggested instead that churches should post armed guards to deter Muslim extremists. Meserete Kristos College has chosen to identify as a peace church institution, yet dissident voices are heard on the question of violence.

It is evident that Ethiopia's Anabaptists have divergent views of Islam and Muslims, which is to be expected in a context of rapid church growth and political change. The potential establishment of a peace and conflict studies program at the seminary would play an important role in keeping the MKC connected to the broader Anabaptist tradition.

Kenya

Kenya is a flashpoint for interfaith tension in the region. The Kenyan military presence in Somalia has served as justification for the militant group al-Shabaab's lethal attacks in Nairobi, Garissa, and elsewhere. With each incident of terror, the tension increases. A major part of the challenge is that Kenya has received waves of refugees from Somalia over the last quarter century. Many have ended up in refugee camps, in particular Dadaab in

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[10] Name withheld. Essay for Islam and Christianity course in Masters in Theological Studies program, Meserete Kristos College/Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, February 2016.

northeastern Kenya, which is home to a third of a million Somali refugees, making it the largest refugee camp in the world. MCC supports Lutheran World Federation training of teachers in Dadaab.[11] A key point of contact for Mennonites is the Somali neighborhood of Eastleigh in Nairobi. MCC supports peace projects in Eastleigh, including peace clubs in primary schools, with the permission of the Kenyan Ministry of Education.[12]

In 2015 I facilitated a workshop with Somali community leaders in Eastleigh in an attempt to understand and address the impact of the actions of Kenyan security forces there. Already living in overcrowded, under-resourced conditions, young Somali men face regular harassment from police. In fact, they refer to themselves as "Walking ATMs" because they can be stopped and relieved of their cash at any time. It is difficult to imagine the impact of this kind of trauma. If the purported intention of these operations is to combat radicalization, they are having the exact opposite effect.

A Kenyan Mennonite congregation gathers in Eastleigh every Sunday in the Eastleigh Fellowship Center, which EMM established in 1977 as a community center for Somalis. Under the ownership of the Kenya Mennonite Church, the Center brings Muslims and Christians together for language learning, sports, and other activities. On a single day at the Center one can observe a Somali community meeting, an English class, a basketball coach training session, and private tutoring, all happening at the same time. Members of EMM's Christian-Muslim Relations Team have also conducted workshops at the Center on interfaith dialogue at the request of the Kenyan Mennonite Church.

Pastor Rebecca Osiro of the Eastleigh congregation, who also serves as Vice President of Mennonite World Conference, describes the situation in this way:

> The biggest challenge is disconnect due to suspicion, fear and distrust imbued with ignorance of the fundamentals of the Muslims' faith and manifestations of radical Islam. This suspicion continues to damage social bonds as well as undermine social cohesion at the slightest indication of political upheaval. At personal levels, Muslims find Mennonites to be

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[11] Laura and Ken Litwiller e-mail, May 28, 2016.
[12] Fred Bobo, MCC Kenya, e-mail to author, November 30, 2015.

> peaceful and easy to relate with. . . . The peaceful Mennonite approach can provide a breakthrough in Christian-Muslim relations and interfaith dialogue. That a Kenyan Mennonite congregation (EFC Mennonite Church) has existed among majority Muslims for years without any interference or tension is quite remarkable.[13]

Another growing point of contact is a number of Kenyan Mennonite congregations planted in the majority-Muslim areas of Mombasa and along the coast.

Tanzania

Continuing along the Swahili coast into Tanzania and Zanzibar, one enters the heartland of East African Islam's historical relationship to the Arab world. As home to most of Tanzania's Muslims, Zanzibar and the cities along the coast have a long-standing tension with the majority-Christian mainland. This pressure is mitigated, however, by a couple of factors. First, Tanzania has not experienced the same level of Muslim refugee resettlement as has Kenya, and therefore has not dealt with the challenge of integration *en masse*. Second, Tanzanians pride themselves on national unity across ethnic and religious boundaries, articulated under the umbrella term *ujamaa* (familyhood).

According to MCC Country Representative for Tanzania Sharon Mkisi, "In our experience, it has been very rare to see tension due to our different religions. . . . Respectful relationships have been the norm. The local agency where I worked as a service worker started and ended their meetings with prayers. One would be Christian and one Muslim. It seemed to work well and I did not see animosity one towards the other in the workplace either."[14] MCC also runs a program in the north on Reducing Violence towards people with albinism, and the village education team consists of Muslim traditional healers as well as Christians working together.

The coastal areas to the east, however, have a higher percentage of Muslims as well as more influence from fundamentalist forms of Islam. Mennonite churches in Dar es Salaam and the surrounding areas experience some hostility. In 2015 a pastor of a Mennonite church in a majority Muslim

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[13] Rebecca Osiro, Pastor of Eastleigh Mennonite Church, e-mail, May 30, 2016.
[14] Sharon Mkisi, MCC Country Representative for Tanzania, e-mail, May 30, 2016.

neighborhood of Dar es Salaam led his congregation in a program offering healthcare to Muslim neighbors. At the same time, the congregation was constructing a new church building. The congregation's increased profile in the neighborhood led to threats against the pastor and the church. The incident has served as a wake-up call for the eastern diocese that intentional peacebuilding with Muslim neighbors is a necessity.

On Zanzibar itself, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the archipelago has a significant secessionist movement, of which one factor is the impulse to establish Zanzibar as an independent Islamic republic. The future of the unity between the mainland and Zanzibar is unclear, and political uncertainty around elections, which have not gone well, has a decidedly religious component.

Observations and Proposals

While no Mennonite churches exist on Zanzibar, our family serves there with the Mennonite Board, and I teach in a peacebuilding program affiliated with a Lutheran university on the mainland, the first of its kind on Zanzibar. The program is intended to bring together Muslim and Christian faculty and students in both peace and conflict studies and more general liberal arts courses. I was warmly welcomed by the Lutheran and Catholic staff at the Zanzibar interfaith center, largely because of the Mennonites' reputation as pioneers of peacebuilding. When I met with the Danish Lutheran director and his Tanzanian Lutheran colleague, their first comment was, "You are from the theological tribe of John Paul Lederach? Welcome aboard." The Mennonite reputation for peacebuilding has deep roots and broad reach.

My first observation is therefore that the Mennonite interface with Muslims in East Africa has fostered ecumenical partnerships, particularly with Lutherans in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. Much of this collaboration has occurred around the practice of theological and peacebuilding education in relation to Muslims, as Mennonites have partnered with Tumaini University in Tanzania, St. Paul's University in Kenya, and the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology in Addis Ababa. This activity is the latest chapter in the ongoing healing of the pain of centuries. The Anabaptist commitment to nonviolence was most offensive to 16th-century Protestant and Catholic leaders in the context of the threat of Turkish Muslim invaders.

It is therefore striking that this rift should be repaired in the 21st century through the practice of peacebuilding with Muslim neighbors.

My second observation is that proximity between Muslims and Christians does not necessarily translate into familiarity. Even generations of living as neighbors can leave the misunderstandings of one another untouched. In my interactions with Anabaptist Christians in the region, a paucity of informed contact with Islamic faith and practice makes individuals and groups susceptible to error. For example, I asked students in my course in Ethiopia how many had ever been inside a mosque, and only one person raised his hand. Several expressed the idea that mosques were not places a Christian should go, either because of spiritual risk or because they would never be welcomed there. So we decided that it was important for us to visit a mosque during prayer, to be there as learners and to hear from Muslims gathered there as to why their faith was important to them.

To take another example: Many Christians in Tanzania have the idea that Muslim funerals include the ritual of eating food cooked with water that had been used to wash the body of the deceased. Tanzanian Muslims will be quick to tell you that this is an entirely absurd idea, violating cultural and religious taboos. I asked Mennonite pastors how many had heard about this practice, and everyone had. When I asked how many believed it, many were hesitant to say make a statement either way. This is one small example, but a host of theological issues are impacted by more exposure; Christians who study Islamic history, faith, and practice are more capable of finding common ground, responding sensitively, and engaging in the self-criticism that is necessary for authentically growing Christian faith.

This leads me to my third observation, which is also a proposal: North American Mennonites in East Africa find themselves drawn to education, at the request of local Mennonites and local Muslims. This is true in Somaliland, where the Ministry of Education asks for Mennonite teachers, and universities welcome Mennonite lecturers. Likewise in Tanzania and Kenya, where MCC does village and school education projects. It is also true in Zanzibar, where an active interfaith diploma program is developing. Not all the needs and invitations can be met, but this is certainly a gift and an opportunity.

Commenting on Philip Jenkins's predictions of "major trouble ahead

between Islam and 'the next Christendom'" (by which he means the growing churches of Africa and Asia), Gordon Nickel asks, "Do Mennonites around the world have nothing to say about this? Surely a church representing the peace tradition can serve as an alternative to the Christian crusading tradition."[15]

The question of what Mennonites have to say in response to the collision of Islam and the growing East African church is best answered by looking to what kind of involvements Mennonites seek out. That Mennonites are drawn to peace education is no accident. Education is crucial to the practice of enemy and neighbor love, because it shapes the way one sees oneself in relation to the other. The role of theological and peace education is to cultivate leaders who have taken on the identify of a peacemaker, firmly grounded in God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The future of the Mennonite churches in East Africa is utterly dependent on the success of forming committed peacemakers. Furthermore, whether Mennonites engage Muslims in constructive or destructive ways depends upon the strength of theological and peace education. I am convinced that the future of the East African Mennonite churches is bound together with the ability to relate well to Muslims; that is, with humility, openness, and understanding.

One remaining gap, therefore, that local and North American Mennonites can try to fill together is the need for theological education along the Swahili coast. We need a vital educational institution in each country and in the appropriate language for leaders: Swahili in Tanzania, English in Kenya, and Amharic in Ethiopia. The role of Maserete Kristos College in serving the church in Ethiopia is invaluable. In a similar way, there is immediate need for a sustainable seminary or diploma program in Dar es Salaam or Mombasa, or somewhere in between, if the East African Mennonite church is going to benefit from the best of our shared faith tradition, and to meet Muslim neighbors in a sensitive, informed, and faithful manner.

Peter M. Sensenig is a regional consultant for Mennonite Board in Eastern Africa, based in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

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[15] Gordon D. Nickel, "Response: A Mennonite Consensus on Purpose," in *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims*, 121.

White Mennonite Peacemakers: Oxymorons, Grace, and Nearly Thirty Years of Talking About Whiteness

Tobin Miller Shearer

In the late 1990s, three of my colleagues and I conducted a Damascus Road Anti-Racism workshop for fifty Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) staff and volunteers, most on their way to international service sites. With a few exceptions, white Mennonites from the US dominated the group. Less than forty-eight hours later, a small remnant remained, a mere third of the group. The rest had left to protest what they had felt was a confrontational, rigid, and one-sided workshop.

Although this was not the first training meltdown we encountered, it was by far the most dramatic. That it had unfolded where many of us earned our livelihoods only added to the stress. As we debriefed, we pondered what had gone awry. Hundreds of other workshops, while intense, had gone well. Participants regularly lauded our ability to navigate racism's treacherous waters. Yet, as we lingered over coffee and wondered about our future employment, one realization became clear: the mood shifted, the intensity increased, and conflict erupted whenever a critical mass of white North American Mennonite peacemakers—those activists, pastors, educators, and theologians who claimed identities as peace and justice advocates—joined an anti-racism training.

Twenty years later, one question continues to trouble me: Why did we have such a difficult time working with white North American Mennonite peacemakers in anti-racism trainings? The musings that follow emerge from my social location as a white, heterosexual, male, from the nearly thirty years I've invested in dismantling racism in the church and academy, and from my research, teaching, and writing on whiteness. The two touchstones I will return to in this essay are, as my title suggests, oxymorons and grace.

First, a definition. The literature on white identity provides multiple definitions of whiteness, ranging from those of historians and sociologists like W.E.B. DuBois, who in 1920 proclaimed that "whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!," to those of literary luminaries like

Tony Morrison, who define whiteness as a racial identity encumbered by "a dark and abiding presence that moves the hearts and texts of American literature with fear and longing."[1] I will employ the definition offered by poet and theologian James W. Perkinson, who contends that whiteness "is a cipher for a social position of domination underwritten by a text of absolution."[2] His approach highlights the dynamics of superiority and innocence, two themes especially relevant for this discussion. Perkinson's definition obtains wherever colonialism has left a legacy. But there are white people and there are white people; that is, as the scholarship on whiteness has demonstrated, whiteness has many expressions.[3] As mediated by gender, sexual orientation, class, region, physical ability, and the full range of the human condition, whiteness looks different at different times and places.[4] The question I want to explore is this: Are white Mennonite peacemakers in North America really different from other religious white people?

As I spent more time outside the Mennonite community, I became aware that white Mennonites are not unique. I listened to Unitarian Universalists describe deep resistance among their most progressive white congregants. I heard Roman Catholics attest to the "scotosis" or blindness of white Catholics "to White privilege. . . ."[5] I read historian Carolyn Dupont's unveiling of white southern evangelicals' penchant for white supremacy, and encountered a similar acceptance of white power among contemporary evangelicals through the work of sociologists Christian Smith and Michael

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[1] W.E. Burghardt DuBois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Humanity Books, 1920), 56; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992), 33.

[2] James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 14.

[3] Charles W. Mills, "Racial Exploitation and the Wages of Whiteness," in *The Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Maria Krysan and Amanda E. Lewis (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 246.

[4] Pamela Perry, *Shades of White: White Kids and Racial Identities in High School* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2002), 5; John Hartigan, *Odd Tribes: Toward a Cultural Analysis of White People* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2005), 14-15.

[5] Alex Mikulich, "Mapping 'Whiteness': The Complexity of Racial Formation and the Subversive Moral Imagination of the 'Motley Crowd,' " *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2005): 101.

Emerson.[6]

However, I also came to realize that, if not unique, white Mennonite peacemakers brought a particular, conflicted identity to the work of anti-racism, an oxymoron of sorts. The term "White Mennonite" itself reveals the tension. Historian, activist, and sage Vincent Harding plumbed the depths of that contradiction at the 1967 Mennonite World Conference when he observed that "Sometimes . . . we clearly control the power, subtle power, like the power of Mennonite prestige, the power of middleclass respectability, the power of whiteness. Can we recommend the way of powerlessness while we dwell comfortably among the powerful?"[7] Harding recognized a debilitating tension arising from the juxtaposition of an identity based on power and privilege with an identity based on self-sacrifice and humility.

I contend that white Mennonite peacemakers can foster integrity for their witness by coming to terms with three legacies of whiteness that have shaped white Mennonites' theology, service, and peacemaking.

I begin with theology. As Perkinson notes, "the problem with white theological talk is that it is almost always about race without ever mentioning race."[8] More specifically, following James Cone, the fundamental notion of salvation itself—that is, our soteriology—has in modernity been directly linked with whiteness.[9] Paraphrasing Cone, Perkinson states that "whiteness has functioned in modernity as a surrogate form of 'salvation,' a mythic presumption of wholeness."[10] Although we draw from a rich Anabaptist conception of salvation that has often linked spirituality and economics, we who are white must come to terms with our history of presenting ourselves as the models for others' salvation.[11] Like the rest of white society, our conception of a white Jesus has promoted a "sacred whiteness [that] stretched

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[6] Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2013), 7; Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 76.

[7] Vincent Harding, "The Peace Witness and Revolutionary Movements," *Mennonite Life*, October 1967, 164.

[8] Perkinson, *White Theology*, 190.

[9] James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), 49.

[10] Perkinson, *White Theology*, 3.

[11] Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Newton, KS: Herald Press, 2010), 45-46.

back in time thousands of years and forward in sacred space to heaven and the second coming."[12] We are in need of saving from our own conception of salvation.

As to service, white Mennonite peacemakers have participated, and do participate, in selfless enterprises of disaster response, famine relief, technological development, and documentation of sexual abuse and historical trauma. Yet within the most popular forms of short-term service, those that draw volunteers to distant locales, the whiteness of kindness remains. Kindness as an expression of service dampens systemic analysis, focuses on interpersonal relationships, and is largely one-way in its orientation.[13] Riddled with white privilege, short-term service of this variety sends those with power and privilege to save those without such benefits. The model simply cannot address this power disparity and, as such, satisfies only the interests of those who serve. Even though leaders from communities of color have—for at least a decade now—identified multiple problems with short-term mission service projects, the industry that supports such ventures has been unable or unwilling to stop. Back in 2001, Texas A&M historian Felipe Hinojosa wrote a trenchant critique, and in the late 1990s my colleague Regina Shands Stoltzfus and I proposed a moratorium on short-term mission service projects that got us called on the carpet but did not lead to substantive change.[14]

In addition to influencing service and theology, whiteness has also shaped our peacemaking. The question is not *whether* white Mennonites engage in peacemaking—many do and have for centuries—but *how* they do so. Although a new sophistication is emerging as resources on conflict

[12] Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2012), 8.

[13] Tobin Miller Shearer, "The Problem of Kindness—Christian Fresh Air Missions and the Dynamics of Christian Whiteness," *Journal of Childhood and Religion* 6, no. 3 (2015): http://childhoodandreligion.com/issues/volume-6-2015/.

[14] Felipe Hinojosa, et al., "Stories of Protest about Short-Term Mission," *The Mennonite*, July 3, 2001, 15-16; Regina Shands Stoltzfus and I proposed a short-term service moratorium to Mennonite youth conference ministers and denominational personnel at a seminar in Orlando, Florida, in 1997. I rearticulated those ideas in Tobin Miller Shearer, "Bag the Baggage: Ten Ways to Shuck the Weight of Short-Term Missions," *With*, July/August 2002, 8-11, and Tobin Miller Shearer, "When Doing Good Does Bad," *With*, July/August 2002, 20-23.

transformation, the doctrine of discovery, and other post-colonial criticism gain a wider audience, peacemaking in the Mennonite church continues to be burdened by unacknowledged privilege. My point here is that white peacemakers in North America cannot be effective without understanding their white identity and taking it into account when engaged in peacemaking enterprises.

And now for grace. How does grace fit into a discussion of the contradictions of white Mennonite peacemakers? Let me start with a quotation from womanist poet Audre Lorde: "Once we recognize what it is we are feeling, once we recognize we can feel deeply, love deeply, can feel joy, then we will demand that all parts of our lives produce that kind of joy." Although Lorde wrote primarily to women of color, I have wondered what this sentiment could mean if applied to white people. What would it mean for me as a white person to love white people so deeply as to produce joy even while naming white identity as grounded in superiority, racism, privilege, and exclusion? Myles Horton, the white director of the Highlander Center, the famed civil rights movement training institution, offers a way forward. "Your job as a gardener or as an educator is to know that the potential is there and that it will unfold," he has said. "You have to posit trust in the learner in spite of the fact that the people you're dealing with may not, on the surface, seem to merit that trust. . . . And in order to do this, you have to start with people where they are without losing sight of where you want them to go."[15]

However, this is a precarious insight. North American society has been structured to make white people—white, straight, able-bodied men in particular—feel comfortable, affirmed, included, and accepted. As a result, grace can be problematic. I remember a white workshop participant who, after only a few days of training, asked people of color to offer him a measure of grace for the mistakes he had already made and those he would make in the future. They explained that they had been offering grace to white people for centuries and it was time for something different. As author Drew Hart has pointed out, "Very frequently, racial exchange solely happens under the terms and conditions of white people, which in itself is already an act of

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[15] Helen Fox, "*When Race Breaks Out*": *Conversations About Race and Racism in College Classrooms* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 84-85.

reaffirming the racialized hierarchy."[16] Demanding grace from people of color in this way only serves to perpetuate white dominance and control.

So, the question is not whether or not to love white people, but how best to do so. In particular, I wonder how best to love white Mennonite peacemakers. Ethicist Alex Mikulich put it this way: "Walking the way of the cross . . . means setting foot on a journey filled with tensions, contradictions, doubts, fears, [as we] acknowledge and subvert our participation in structures of privilege and exclusion and walk with our brothers and sisters through the radical and loving transformation of the cross of Jesus."[17]

I spend my days mostly working with white people on racism. The university where I teach is populated with white students who, along with some Black and Native students, show up in my classes. Thus I am constantly challenged to teach where students have little sophistication about, experience in, or awareness of the way race works in society. In that setting, I do my best to create a learning environment that is not centered on guilt, does not engage in individual shaming, and places the expectation that—regardless of where they grew up or what experiences they have had—students can develop the skills and analysis needed to respond with alacrity and precision to racism when they see it. Some days go better than others.

While preparing this essay, I encountered a photo of two white young men wearing T-shirts that exclaimed "Trump Wall**!**", a reference to the proposal by then Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump to build a wall between the US and Mexico. The young men were chanting "Build the Wall, Build the Wall" at a town hall meeting on Saturday, April 2, 2016, in Rothschild, Wisconsin. The duo did not so much look angry as gleeful, ardent, fanatical. I don't think they could have been more than sixteen or seventeen at most.

In the end, I most desire that white Mennonite peacemakers resolve our internal contradictions so that we can reach an audience made up of "Trump Bros." This is not a new thought. In 1968, historian and activist Vincent Harding wrote "The History of a Wall," a reference to a different kind of wall, the wall of racial separation. "The wall was high and hard, and lives

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[16] Drew G. I. Hart, *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016), 23.
[17] Mikulich, "Mapping 'Whiteness,'" 117.

continued to be shattered against it," he wrote. "More and more persons were growing bitter and impatient, not simply against the wall itself but against the millions of Americans who by their empathy and passive cooperation allowed it to stand."[18] He challenged white Mennonites to affect the lives of those white Americans whose "empathy and passive cooperation" kept that wall standing. Might there be a role for white Mennonite peacemakers to enter the spaces where Trump Bros thrive, to learn of their fears, to offer an alternative?

I return now to that anti-racism training meltdown at MCC, because I have not yet described how it ended. During a break before the final session, tornado sirens began to wail. As the sky turned green around us, we crammed into a basement room and stood cheek to jowl, tense and irritable, awaiting the storm to pass. The anger, resentment, and frustration from the past three days of training swirled through the room like the winds outside. And then, for a few minutes, amid a common desire for right relationship and restored communion—for these are also the deepest desires of white Mennonite peacemakers—we prayed and spoke together.

Of course, that wasn't the end of the story. In many ways, that training marked a fissure in the relationship between Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process staff and MCC that eventually led to Damascus Road's departure. Yet the struggle of working with white Mennonite peacemakers on anti-racism leaves me with two hopes.

The first hope is that white Mennonite peacemakers will find ways to name, confront, and gain the resources for dealing with the internal contradiction of whiteness. And, by doing so, that they will gain the integrity to use that power and privilege in an appropriate manner. As womanist theologian Kelly Brown Douglas maintains, "the important work [for white people] is showing up at the places of injustice to add your supporting voice and body and use your power (rather than lay aside your power) to overturn injustice and give witness to the justice of God."[19]

The second hope is that white Mennonite peacemakers find ways to reach people like the two young Trump supporters. Such a significant,

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[18] Vincent Harding, "The History of a Wall," *Gospel Herald*, June 18, 1968, 545.
[19] As paraphrased by Rick Hudgens in a personal reflection from Douglas's April 6, 2016, lecture at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago.

essential, and risky contribution could play a small role in dismantling the systems of oppression raging in our world. It would require plenty of grace to do so—not so much the kind of grace that asks for cheap forgiveness, to paraphrase Dietrich Bonhoeffer—but the kind that recognizes one's brokenness within and, through that brokenness, aims to connect with the brokenness in the world. It is the more difficult path, to see working class, rural, and suburban neighborhoods as one's field of endeavor. There is no glamor associated with it. I am aware of that every morning that I walk into class in Missoula, Montana. But I am hopeful. Because of the struggle born of tornado trainings, I remain hopeful.

Tobin Miller Shearer is Associate Professor of History at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana.

Were the Early Christians Pacifists? Does It Matter?

Jennifer Otto

Among theologians writing in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, the characterization of the early Jesus movement as "pacifist" has taken on an almost axiomatic status. J. Denny Weaver's comments in *The Nonviolent Atonement* are representative of this consensus:

> Since the Roman empire of the first century did not recognize the reign of God or confess Jesus as Messiah, it is hardly surprising that the church differed from the empire. By the majority of accounts, one of the most easily perceived differences concerned the use of the sword. Whereas the empire had armies, and emperors consolidated their authority with military power, the early church rejected the use of the sword and was pacifist.[1]

Appeals to the pacifism and nonviolence of the early Christians are made by pastors, practitioners, and activists affiliated with Mennonite institutions in support of their work to oppose war, abortion, and capital punishment.[2] The assertion that early Christians refused to participate in the violence of the Roman Empire even under threat of persecution functions as both inspiration and ideal for many pacifists seeking to follow the way of Jesus today.[3] In Mennonite historiography, the conversion of the Emperor Constantine is often described as a "fall" to rival Eden, a crystallizing event within a process of a gradual decline from the primitive Church's initial espousal of nonviolence.[4] The narrative of decline from initial pacifism

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[1] J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 81.

[2] See, for example, the blog of Darnell Barkman, Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in the Philippines: darnellbarkman.com/the-early-church-on-killing/.

[3] "For 400 years nonviolent peace remained the mark of the Christian until a theologian named Augustine explained how war could be just and used to create peace." Fernando Enns and Annette Mosher, "Introduction," *in Just Peace: Ecumenical, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Fernando Enns and Annette Mosher (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 1.

[4] "The progressive decay of the primitive Christian rejection of Caesar's wars had many causes that built up gradually, although the Constantinian transition was the weightiest." John

to entanglement with political power has proven to be very attractive for Mennonite peace theologians, particularly as it enables casting 16th-century Anabaptists in the role of heroic re-discoverers of the "authentic" teachings and practices of the early Church.

As a Christian and a Mennonite, I am committed to following Jesus in his way of peace and, as such, consider myself a "pacifist." As a historian of the initial centuries of Christianity, however, I am unconvinced that the early Christians should be described as pacifist, in the sense that all Christians were opposed to participation in war and other forms of state violence.[5] Moreover, I am even less convinced that any Christian in the ancient world could be described as committed to the practice of "nonviolence," a concept that remains under-defined in current Mennonite discourse despite its ubiquity.[6] Literary and archaeological data for Christian participation in military and state violence have been analyzed repeatedly over the past century, with interpretation of the results typically aligning with the theological and ecclesial commitments of the interpreter.[7] A short paper is

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Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, ed. Glen Stassen, Mark Thiessen Nation, and Matt Hamsher (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 45.

[5] I adopt here the definition of pacifism that Peter J. Leithart derives from his reading of John Howard Yoder's works. Leithart writes, "I am using [pacifism] in a loose sense not to denote a specific rationale for Christian opposition to war and violence but in reference to the simple fact of Christian opposition to violence and war. No matter what his reasons, a church father who condemns all Christian participation in war, or violent service to the state, is 'pacifist.'" Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 257.

[6] On early Christian "pacifism" and "nonviolence," John Howard Yoder writes: "The early Christians were not pacifist in the sense that, when called by the draft, they did not serve. There was no draft. They were not pacifist in the sense of asking Nero to call off the superpower struggle against the Parthians. Neither they nor Nero, not having read Locke or Rousseau, thought of Nero as being accountable to 'the people' in general or to Christians in particular. But they were nonviolent. They saw in the passion and death of their Lord the model of divine-human virtue to place over against other visions of human prospering. Doing without dominion was not for them a second-best alternative to glory; it was the way to participate in the victory of redemption." *The War of the Lamb*, 39. This definition of nonviolence is problematic, as it reduces nonviolence to the refusal of "dominion" in a political sense. Early Christian texts are ambivalent about the ethics of violence used by the Christian "dominus" within the household and the church.

[7] See C.J. Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (London: Headley Bros., 1919); Roland

unfortunately not the place for yet another full analysis of this data. Rather, this paper will focus on the second question in its title: Does it matter if the early church was pacifist? Specifically: What do pacifist Christians gain if there was a period in history during which Christians were united in their opposition to war and state violence? What, if anything, would we Mennonites lose if we were to acknowledge that early Christian attitudes to the Roman empire always included varying degrees of negotiation, accommodation, and assimilation—not only resistance?[8] What if we were to discover that Christians have always had diverse responses to the challenge of living in a complicated and broken world as followers of Jesus, responses that have included participation in violence?

Does it matter whether the early Christians were pacifists? On the one hand, yes. It matters that we try to tell the story of the early Church as accurately as possible. While I am aware of the pitfalls of claims to "objectivity" in the writing of history, events do occur in time, and, although no reading can ever be entirely objective, the evidence of those events that survives ought to receive as fair an interpretation as possible. In the introduction to *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, John Howard Yoder argues for this. "We are working in the realm of historical theology, and in the first instance, ours is a descriptive task," he contends. "Christians have taken many attitudes to war, peace, and revolution. We need to study and

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Bainton, "The Early Church At War," *Harvard Theological Review* 39 (1946): 75-92; Jean-Michel Hornus, *It is Not Lawful for Me to Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence, and the State*, trans. Alan Kreider (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980); John Helgeland, Robert J. Daly, and J. Patout Burns, *Christians and the Military: The Early Experience* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); John Shean, *Soldiering for God: Christianity and the Roman Army* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); George Kalantzis, *Caesar and the Lamb: Early Christian Attitudes on War and Military Service* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012); Despina Iosif, *Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013).

[8] Although prompted by a consideration of Josephus, Daniel Boyarin's comments are also *apropos* of Christians in the Roman Empire: "There was no time in which the Romans were writing" when "elaborate strategic adjustments were not being made by themselves and their subjects…. Every person and group has to ask themselves: To what extent do we want and need to collaborate or to resist the Powers That Be? To what extent, and at what cost, can we resist? If we wanted to, could we actually withdraw or flee from, hide from those powers? If so, how and to where?" Carlin Barton and Daniel Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2016), 179.

interpret each in its own historical context, for its own sake, and as historians of Christian thought, objectively. The task of reading a story objectively is not without problems, but at the outset we will seek to be historians and not apologetes."[9]

Thus I am troubled by the apologetic tenor found in pacifist Christian accounts of the early Church, not least among those written by Yoder himself. John Helgeland makes a pointed but correct objection when he notes that pacifist scholars tend to support their arguments by assembling anthologies of snippets of early writings rather than by dealing with whole works, to say nothing of whole *corpora*, produced by early Christian writers.[10] This cut-and-paste method, employed in recent volumes, including Michael G. Long's *Christian Peace and Nonviolence: A Documentary History*[11] and Ronald J. Sider's *The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion, and Capital Punishment,*[12] enable the editors to expose readers only to the texts most congenial to their own arguments. In their hodgepodge presentation, these volumes result in both decontextualization and distortion of the debates in the early church over military participation and the ethics of violent conduct.

To take one example, consider the variety of uses to which Tertullian's treatise *On the Military Crown* (*De Corona Militis*) has been put. Written in the North African city of Carthage in the first decade of the 3rd century, this treatise is cited frequently in investigations of early Christian pacifism[13]—and with good reason, as it is the earliest surviving treatise penned by a Christian to deal at length with the propriety of Christian

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[9] John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution*, ed. Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 19.

[10] John Helgeland, "Christians and the Roman Army from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.23.1 (1979): 754-56.

[11] Michael G. Long, ed., *Christian Peace and Nonviolence: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

[12] Ronald J. Sider, *The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion, and Capital Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

[13] Tertullian's text is considered by Anabaptist/Mennonite scholars in Sider, *The Early Church on Killing,* 58-62, and A. James Reimer, *Christians and War: A Brief History of the Church's Teachings and Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). It is discussed by several contributors to *Constantine Revisited: Leithart, Yoder, and the Constantinian Debate*, ed. John D. Roth (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

military participation. Tertullian is spurred to write by a recent controversy caused by a soldier whose Christianity motivated him to refuse a *donative*, a laurel crown offered him as part of a military ceremony, on the grounds that to do so would be idolatrous. The soldier was subsequently executed for his obstinacy in refusing the honor. Tertullian reports that observers, some of them Christian, considered his refusal to be rash, unnecessary, and displaying excessive zeal for martyrdom.

Over the course of 15 chapters, Tertullian uses this case to argue that it is better to face martyrdom than to wear a crown, even though wearing crowns is never explicitly rejected in the Christian scriptures. Mennonite readers devote most of their attention to chapter 11, where Tertullian sets out, as part of his larger investigation on crown wearing, to "inquire, whether warfare is proper at all for Christians." He answers the question with a resounding "no." He asks, "Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain, and the prison, and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?"[14] On the basis of this denunciation of Christian participation in military and other state violence, *On the Military Crown* is frequently included in collections of pacifist writings of the early church, and has been read as expressing the church's official rejection of military participation.[15]

However, this same treatise is also cited by scholars such as Despina Iosif [16] and Peter Leithart[17] to support the claim that military participation was not unusual for 2nd-century Christians. They point out that Tertullian's intended addressees were fellow Christians, those who felt there was no contradiction between military service and proper piety. Moreover, Tertullian himself admits that the man who refused the laurel wreath had, until that fateful decision, lived unproblematically as both a soldier and a

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[14] Tertullian, *De Corona* 11. Translations of *De Corona* are based on those of S. Thelwall in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).

[15] Long*, Christian Peace and Nonviolence*, 21-22; Kalantzis, *Caesar and the Lamb,* 120-26.

[16] Iosif*, Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service*, 67-70.

[17] Leithart*, Defending Constantine,* 263.

Christian. Nor was he the only Christian in his company.[18] *On the Military Crown* therefore may credibly be read as indicating active disagreement and lack of consensus among the Christians of Tertullian's Carthage on the legitimacy of participation in the military.

Pacifist scholar Alan Kreider acknowledges the intra-Christian debate pervading the pages of *On the Military Crown*, but he silences Tertullian's opponents by arguing that they must have been lay believers, while "the leading theologian in the province, Tertullian, articulated the position of the church to correct them."[19] Mark Thiessen Nation makes the same move, describing Tertullian's opponents as "marginal unnamed figures" and as "unnamed individuals who taught and practiced things that were contrary to the teaching of the Church."[20] But Kreider and Thiessen Nation both presume too much; no evidence suggests that Tertullian spoke as the "official voice" of the African church.

From his own lifetime onwards, Tertullian's relationship with other Christians was testy. The earliest source referring to him as a priest is Jerome, writing more than a century after the fact, but this claim has been convincingly refuted by T.D. Barnes.[21] Nor is it clear that Tertullian's opponents were lay people. They were more likely ordained church leaders, with Tertullian functioning as a gadfly. His own characterization of his opponents at the outset of *De Corona* suggests as much:

> It is plain that they have rejected the prophecies of the Holy Spirit; they are also proposing the refusal of martyrdom. So they murmur that a peace so good and long is endangered for them. Nor do I doubt that some are already turning their back on the

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[18] "A certain one of the soldiers approached—one who was more of a soldier of God (*dei miles*), more constant than the rest of his [Christian] brothers (*constantior fratribus*)—who assumed that they could serve two masters—his head alone uncovered, the useless crown in his hand. And by this discipline he was known as a Christian and he shone forth." Tertullian, *De Corona* 1.1.

[19] Alan Kreider, "Converted but not Baptized," in *Constantine Revisited*, 40.

[20] Mark Thiessen Nation, "Against Christianity and For Constantine: One Heresy or Two?," in *Constantine Revisited*, 75-76. That Tertullian refuses to name his opponent says nothing about his "marginality" within the Carthaginian Christian community.

[21] Jerome, *On the Lives of Illustrious Men* 53.4; T.D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971; 1985), 11, 117-20.

> Scriptures, are packing their bags, are armed for flight from city to city; for that is all of the gospel they care to remember. I have come to know their pastors (*pastores*) too: in peace, lions; in the fight, deer.[22]

Tertullian describes his opponents as rejecting "the prophecies of the Holy Spirit," by which he likely refers to the prophesies of Montanus, the controversial church leader from Phrygia whose teaching would later be condemned as the heresy of Montanism. In other words, Tertullian's opponents on the propriety of Christian military participation appear to be "orthodox" Christians, while Tertullian aligned himself with a party that became condemned as heretical.[23]

Before we Mennonites rush to rally behind Tertullian as the spokesman of the "authentic" or "official" Christian position, we should extend our consideration beyond *De Corona* to the rest of his writings. While we may nod in agreement with his full-throated rejection of military participation, his positions on other issues, including the position of women in the Christian community, ought to give us pause. The same Tertullian who penned "the Lord, in disarming Peter, ungirded the sword-belt of every soldier"[24] also famously wrote of every woman,

> And do you not know that you are an Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil's entryway; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first deserter of the divine law; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. Because of your deed—namely, death—even the Son of God had to die![25]

Consider also Tertullian's gleeful expectation of the post-mortem punishments in store not only for Roman government officials but also for other non-Christians, including philosophers and performers of Roman entertainments:

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[22] Tertullian, *De Corona* 1.5.
[23] Eusebius (ca. 260-340 CE) describes the Montanist "heresy" in his *Church History* 5.18.
[24] Tertullian, *On Idolatry* 19.
[25] Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women* 1.1.2.

What sight shall wake my wonder, what my laughter, my joy, my exaltation?—as I see all those kings, those great kings, unwelcomed in heaven, along with Jove, along with those who told of their ascent, groaning in the depths of darkness! And the magistrates who persecuted the name of Jesus liquefying in fiercer flames than they kindled in their rage against Christians!—those sages too, the philosophers blushing before their disciples as they blaze together, the disciples whom they taught that god was concerned with nothing, that men have no souls at all, or that what souls they have shall never return to their former bodies! . . . And there will be tragic actors to be heard, more vocal in their own tragedy; and the players to be seen, lither of limb by far in the fire; and then the charioteer to watch, red all over in the wheel of flame; and next the athletes to be gazed upon, not in their gymnasiums but hurled in the fire . . . these, in some sort, are ours, pictured in the imagination of the spirit by faith . . . I believe things of greater joy than the circus, the theater, the amphitheater, or any stadium.[26]

If we insist that Tertullian speaks as the church's official voice on matters

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[26] Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 30. Translation by Carlin Barton in Barton and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*, 68. Barton attributes Tertullian's rejection of military service not to a benevolent love for enemies but to a totalitarian utopianism: "In the separatist or insurrectionary framework of his thought, Tertullian's Christians both swear and hope together, forming exactly a *coniuratio* and a *conspiratio* that he hopes will result in the replacement of the Roman Empire with one of its own—in which the cult of the king-god will be all-embracing and saturate every aspect of the safe and eternal life. The *sacramentum* (oath) of the *miles dei* (soldier of god) was a competing and more extreme version, an inversion and a rejection of the oaths of loyalty to the Emperor and his ministers, with their offices, honors, and symbols of power.... The *dei miles*, the soldier of God who "disburdened" himself of the vestments of the Roman *miles sacratus*, was Tertullian's model of the Christian breaking his ties with the powerful forces of 'this age' and defining a simplified, purified, more homogenous self. The desire to strip down, to purge oneself of divided and conflicting—and so disabling— obligations, loyalties, and desires attracted those who longed for an energized and clarified vision of one's self in the world. Freed from complexity, guilt and confusion could be washed away.... In this framework of Tertullian's thought, he spurns the 'quibbling,' the *cavillatio* in which the Christians who served in the armed forces of the Roman emperor must inevitably have engaged." Barton, *Imagine No Religion*, 80-81.

of military participation, what kind of authoritative status must we give his opinions on the role of women in the church, or to his joy at the thought of the torture of his enemies? Why on the issue of military participation are Mennonites so quick to pronounce the (supposed) position of the clergy to be the only legitimate Christian position, effectively silencing the laity? Why are we willing to dismiss the voices of "marginal," "unnamed" Christians?

This kind of selective reading of early Christian ethics and practices is what prompts me to ask, What would we as pacifist Christians lose if we were to concede that there was no pacifist consensus in the centuries prior to Constantine? What if the Christians of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries struggled—and often failed—just as much as we do to know how to follow Jesus in difficult and ever-changing circumstances, and this without the benefit of an authoritative canon of scriptures or an established ecclesiastical hierarchy? What do we gain by reading the story of the church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries as a slow decline from an initial pacifist purity that culminates in selling out the church to the empire?

To admit that the authentic Christian tradition, and not only an anomalous, fallen "Constantinian" Christianity, has been used to provoke and justify violent behavior is uncomfortable. Perhaps we are reassured by John Howard Yoder's insistence that "it is possible to renew the entire Christian gospel by overcoming the Constantinian mistake. It has been done."[27] But I fear this reassurance is misplaced. The church has always struggled to grasp—let alone to live into—"the entire Christian gospel," in the centuries before and after the rise of Constantine the Great.

In a recent contribution to *Granta* magazine, Miriam Toews reflects on the violence experienced by her family in their Mennonite community—violence that, she contends, grew out of the community's pacifist practices and convictions. "Pacifism and non-conflict, core tenets of the Mennonite faith," she writes, "may in fact be sources of violence and conflict, all the more damaging because unacknowledged or denied." Toews draws particular attention to shunning, which she describes as "murder without killing," a practice that "creates deep-seated wells of rage that find no release."[28] She

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[27] Yoder, *The War of the Lamb*, 51.
[28] Miriam Toews, "Peace Shall Destroy Many," *Granta,* no. 137 (November 2016), granta.com/peace-shall-destroy-many/. Toews explores these themes more fully in her novels *A*

also identifies a toxic combination of authoritarianism and valorization of suffering within her community that resulted in repressing emotions and suppressing conflicts, often tragically. "War is hell, it's true," she says. "*Shouldn't be exposed* is another hell. *Shouldn't be exposed* stifles and silences and violates. *Shouldn't be exposed* refuses and ignores and shames. *Shouldn't be exposed* shields bullies and tyrants. I have seen it in my own life."

The works of novelists such as Toews and Rudy Wiebe challenge Mennonites to reconsider the ways in which the stories we tell about ourselves may prevent us from recognizing violence in our midst. Similarly, Mennonite narratives identifying Christian violence as a specifically "Constantinian" problem can blind us to discourses of legitimate violence voiced in early Christian texts, discourses that continue serving to legitimize violence within Mennonite communities. While it is not difficult to find early texts that repudiate killing in various circumstances,[29] I know of none that repudiates non-lethal violence. This is partially the result of semantics; the English word "violence," wide-ranging and nebulous as it is, does not have a one-for-one equivalent in either Latin or Greek. The words translated as "violent" in the *New International Version* of Matthew 11:12 and of Acts 2:2, 21:35, 24:7, and 27:41 are forms of the Greek word *bia.* Used in the New Testament to describe people, crowds, winds, and waves, *bia* can carry connotations of violence, strength, and force, depending on the context. Similarly, the Latin word *vis* primarily means strength, power, force, or potency, but can also mean both "violence" and "virtue." Even the Latin word *violentia* can mean "vehemence" or "ferocity" rather than "violence."

What we more often find in many early Christian texts is a renunciation not of violence *per se* but of anger. Unlike violence, anger is an emotion, or, to use the terminology native to antiquity, a "passion." The Platonic and Stoic philosophical systems prominent in the first centuries of the Common Era understood bad behavior to be the result of the passions, associated with the desire for bodily pleasures, usurping the sound judgment

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Complicated Kindness (New York: Counterpoint, 2004) and *All My Puny Sorrows* (Toronto: Albert A. Knopf, 2014).

[29] These instances are collected in Sider's *The Early Church on Killing.* Note that the title of this book is not "The Early Church on Violence," limiting the book's scope only to Christian reflections on lethal violence and avoiding altogether the question of whether the early Church promoted nonviolence.

of right reason. Many extant early Christian texts demonstrate the influence of this line of thinking.[30] They understand Jesus to have taught his disciples to free themselves of their passions in order to achieve a virtuous life. We find this idea expressed in early texts like *Didache* 3.2: "Do not be quick-tempered, for anger leads to murder,"[31] as well as the *Epistle to Diognetus* 16: "About being long-suffering and servants to all and free of anger, this is what Jesus said: 'To him that smites you on one cheek turn the other as well.'"[32]

Using this logic, Christians could—and did—justify committing acts of violence, so long as they acted not out of anger but out of a loving desire to correct. In fact, the use of force was thought necessary in the exercise of discipline. At least this is what the churchman Origen assumes in a homily he preached to the Christians who gathered daily in Caesarea Maritima around the year 240:

> It is necessary that you a sinner, attended by God, taste something more bitter so that once disciplined, you may be saved. And just as when you, punishing a slave or a son, you do not want simply to torment him, rather your goal is to convert him by pains, so God, too, disciplines by the pains from sufferings those who have not been converted to the Word, who have not been cured.[33]

This is a quotation from a man who is often counted among the Christian pacifists and about whom Michael Long claims "it is remarkably clear that

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[30] The integration of Stoic and Middle Platonic ethics with Biblical theology pre-dates the life of Jesus, as is clearly attested in the writings of Philo, the Jewish philosopher and exegete who lived and worked in Alexandria, ca. 20BCE-50CE. Numerous studies have traced the influence of Stoic and Platonic thought in particular on the New Testament authors, especially Paul. See *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

[31] *The Didache* is widely considered the earliest extant church order, incorporating traditions that may date to the first century and pre-date the canonical gospels. See Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary,* Hermeneia 82 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

[32] *The Epistle to Diognetus* is an anonymous apologetic text usually dated to the 2nd century CE. See Clayton N. Jefford, ed., *The Epistle to Diognetus (with the Fragment of Quadratus): Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013).

[33] Origen*, Homily on Jeremiah,* 12. The full homily repays a close reading. See Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah and 1 Kings 28,* trans. John Clark Smith (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2010).

he encouraged a life of non-violence for Christians."[34] Although Origen does indeed criticize Christian participation in military violence, he shows no hesitation in admitting the necessity of violence, even lethal violence, in the exercise of corrective discipline.[35] His position is not idiosyncratic; rather, his analogy derives its efficacy from his congregation's unquestioning acceptance of corporal punishment to discipline and reform misbehaving persons of lower social status. In a provocative study of Christian violence in late antiquity (i.e., roughly the period between 200 and 800 CE,) Michael Gaddis suggests that Christians shared dominant Roman attitudes toward disciplinary violence:

> Certainly the norms of late Roman secular society allowed for many situations in which physical violence was thought to be entirely appropriate. A certain degree of (usually) nonlethal violence helped to enforce asymmetrical power relationships. Those in authority were expected to use disciplinary beating to control the behavior of those under their command. Masters could beat their slaves or servants, teachers their students, fathers their children. This 'normal' violence helped to define the structure of Roman social relations. . . . Where did one draw the line between deadly violence and corrective discipline? Scriptural injunctions such as Jesus' words to Peter—"sheathe your sword" because "those who live by the sword shall die by it"—left much room for ambiguity. Did it forbid all violence, or did it refer specifically to 'bloodshed' by the sword? As opposing parties in the Donatist controversy traded accusations back and forth, some said that it was not 'violence' to beat or to club—so

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[34] Long, *Christian Peace and Nonviolence*, 24.

[35] Origen argues for the necessity of capital punishment later in *Hom. Jer.* 12.5: "Let us suppose that it is the appointed task for a judge to create peace and prepare matters beneficial for the people under him. Let there approach a youthful murderer who projects himself to seem personable and good. Let a mother approach who presents reasons for pity to the judge, that he might take mercy on her old age. Let the wife of this worthless man plead with him to be merciful; let his children who surround him cry out in need. In light of these things, what is fitting for the common good: to show mercy or not to show mercy upon this man? If he is shown mercy, he will repeat the same crimes. If he is not shown mercy, he will die, but the common good will be better off."

long as blades were not used and blood was not shed.[36]

Does it matter if the early Christians were pacifists? I have argued that it matters that we tell the story of the early Church as honestly as possible. Moreover, I contend that a more critical study of the "pacifism" of early Christians may help us to think more clearly about the blind spots in our own purported "nonviolence." I suggest that we have something to gain from letting go of our ideal of the early church as pure and untainted prior to falling into an alliance with the state and its violence. By identifying the Constantinian shift as a decisive breaking point in the history of the early church, we minimize the ways in which the potential for violence in all human relationships has continually plagued Christians from the first century to the present day. The normativity of coercive domestic and disciplinary violence in Christian communities prior to Constantine should prompt us to question the narrative of a nonviolent early Christianity that was fundamentally transformed in its attitude to violence through an alliance with the state. By letting go of an idealized image of a golden age that never was, Mennonite pacifist Christians may be better equipped to name, acknowledge, and overcome temptations to violence in all its forms.[37]

Jennifer Otto, a post-doctoral fellow at Universität Erfurt, Germany, will become an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Lethbridge in Lethbridge, Alberta in July 2018.

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[36] Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999), 141, 144.

Mennonite Peace Theology and Violence against Women

Kimberly L. Penner

I

In *Women's Bodies as Battlefield*, theologian Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite claims that Mennonite peace theology—the sectarian and idealist pacifism of the Mennonite church—perpetuates violence against women by encouraging a "theology of obedience (and especially submission of women), following the example of the sacrificial love of Christ."[1] This is the case, she argues, because the theology of obedience fails to address the nature of power and violence as gendered and sexualized, and thus overlooks the importance of women's agency and the role that choice plays in differentiating between unjust suffering (suffering that is not chosen and perpetuates relationships of domination and subordination) and suffering in the way of Christ (suffering in solidarity with others as a conscious choice and a sign of God's love as shared power).[2] She uses John Howard Yoder's sexual abuses as a primary example of how the theology she criticizes "facilitate[s] violence against women and prevent[s] an appropriate institutional response."[3]

In this paper I consider both Thistlethwaite's claim that Mennonite peace theology perpetuates violence against women and her suggestions for improvement. I begin with a conversation about power and then consider her assertion that Mennonites must reclaim the significance of the physical body for peace theology. Finally, I explore her thoughts on desire and violence,

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[1] Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the Global War on Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 157.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid. For a detailed account of the history of Yoder's sexual abuses, and institutional and ecclesial responses to them, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, "'Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (2015): 7-80. A collection and timeline of articles that outline the conversation and developments regarding the abuses is available on Mennonite Church USA's website: mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/john-howard-yoder-digest-recent-articles-about-sexual-abuse-and-discernment-2/.

especially her argument that Mennonite peace theology also perpetuates violence against women by upholding a patriarchal status quo that eroticizes women (demonstrated by the Yoder case). I respond to her call for an alternative understanding of desire in the form of "erotic peacemaking," that is, "a reconstruction of the erotic as a measure of our individual societal capacity to actually desire justice and peace" which "attempt[s] to engage critical consciousness about the way gender, sex, and race privilege . . . [are] embedded in even the most creative attempts to reframe peacemaking in Western culture."[4] This is daunting work, and the brevity of this article does not allow for great detail, particularly as I construct my own adaptation of erotic peacemaking. Nonetheless, I hope that existing articulations of Mennonite discipleship ethics can be transformed and can resist, as opposed to enabling, gendered and sexualized violence within and outside the community of faith, given its commitment to peace, and I also hope that this article makes a small contribution in that direction.

Thistlethwaite argues that peace theology undergirds patriarchy when it does not systematically address the nature of power. For example, she claims that Yoder's articulation of peace theology as a radical response to Christian discipleship (which reflects the discipleship theology of many Mennonites) does not systematically address the nature of power as potentially dominating and subordinating in gendered and sexualized relationships, especially within the church. This renders the theology and its adherents vulnerable to abuse. She cites an emphasis on "person-to-person" conflict resolution in Yoder's work—a reference to Matthew 18:15-20 (Jesus' instructions on church discipline)—as notably risky. The problem, she contends, is there is little to no regard for power inequalities between victim and offender, which makes the resolution process unsafe for victims.[5]

I agree with Thistlethwaite. Matthew 18:15-20 is not particularly sensitive to the power dynamics between victims and offenders perpetuated by, for example, differences in gender, age, and ecclesial influence. The person-to-person model privileges private communication over public communication. Victims and offenders are encouraged to work directly together toward reconciliation before involving another person and the

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[4] Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield*, 179.
[5] Ibid., 159.

wider community of faith. Such privacy in the beginning of the process is dangerous, because it fosters secrecy around abuse and provides a protective shield for ongoing abuses. Additionally, as theologian Melanie May reveals, privacy makes the possibility of genuine forgiveness suspect. She writes that "my experience teaches me that if privacy is privileged, forgiveness may bottle up what an offense or abusive act stirs up. Forgiveness may function as the flip side of guilt and give in to the perpetrator's cry for relief from responsibility."[6] In this way, the Matthew passage can function to enable an abuser rather than to help parties work toward genuine reconciliation through relationships of shared power and mutuality. By drawing heavily on the one-to-one process for ecclesial reconciliation, Yoder is not suspicious enough of dominating power in the inequity of the process itself in emphasizing the offender's well-being more than the victim's.

The dangers of privacy and strict adherence to the principle of the Matthew passage are especially real for survivors of sexual abuse and gender-based violence. Evidence shows that survivors are vulnerable to ongoing abuse, manipulation, and trauma when forced into an ongoing relationship with their abuser(s).[7] Lydia Neufeld Harder reveals how this is the case in the history of the Mennonite tradition:

> Mennonite women have experienced the power of 'brotherly' admonition, as it was usually called, used against them....Though no comparison has been made between the public confession required of women disciplined for sexual activity resulting in pregnancy and the silence surrounding sexual abuse by male members of the community, it is clear that Mennonites have only recently applied peace teachings to the issue of violence against women. The rule of Christ can therefore be understood as having at least two primary functions within the Mennonite

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[6] Melanie A. May, "The Pleasure of Our Lives as Texts: A New Rule of Christ for Anabaptist Women," *The Conrad Grebel Review,* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 33-47, 36.

[7] From the vast literature on this subject, see Joy M. K. Bussert, *Battered Women: From an Ethic of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment* (New York: Lutheran Church in America, 1986); Carol Penner, *Healing Waters: Churches Working to End Violence Against Women* (Toronto: Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, 2004); and Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

community. It has been used to counter the authority and power of alternative community structures. It has also been used to enforce conformity to community norms that encouraged women's inferior status.[8]

Harder's research further reveals the problematic nature of processes of reconciliation and discernment that do not seek to dismantle dominating relationships of power and commit to the norm of women's well-being.

While Yoder acknowledges the church as *polis* and understands the political to encompass "matters of power, of rank and of money,"[9] he idealizes the church's ability to provide guidance and fair mediation in processes of reconciliation. Again, an analysis of relations of power *within* the ecclesia is missing, even though he acknowledges the ecclesia as a political community. From his perspective, the political community is called to embody particular relationships of power. Yoder values the communal story of those who confess Jesus as Lord (which shapes Christian ethics/discipleship), but he fails to consider the story's potential to be oppressive. Whose story *is* the story of the community?

As Mennonite women, queer persons, and people of color have argued, the story of the community of faith has often been shaped by the experiences of those in leadership positions and with greater social privilege (often synonymous), at the expense of others, namely lay persons and those with less social privilege. Because power operating in all roles, rules, and regulations has the potential to dominate, questions of ethics—of being and acting as moral agents—must always begin with questions about relationships of power. It is not enough for ethics to focus, as Yoder does, on discernment and implementation. Without a commitment to the well-being of women, and to the liberation of all from oppression through nonviolence and the assessment of outcomes with internal accountability, any contribution to or practice of "peace theology" is inadequate and even dangerous. It is not that Yoder neglects the theological issue of power, but that he neglects how power operates within gendered and sexualized relationships, particularly in

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[8] Lydia Neufeld Harder, *Obedience, Suspicion, and the Gospel of Mark: A Mennonite-Feminist Exploration of Biblical Authority* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1998), 45.

[9] John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), ix.

the community of faith, to subordinate, control, marginalize, and oppress—and to fail to form relationships of shared power.

Thistlethwaite names the institutional and ecclesial responses to Yoder's own sexual misconduct as an example of the inadequacy of Matthew 18:15-20 in practice. A person-to-person method modeled on this passage "seemed to keep Mennonites from making an institutional response" and thus enabled Yoder, a man in a position of power and privilege as a respected professor and prominent theologian, "to deflect and obstruct, wanting his accusers [women, often students] to 'come forward' and ignoring (or relying on) the power differential between him and these women."[10] Inattention to Yoder's privilege and its potential influence on a process of reconciliation made any attempt at person-to-person conversation dangerous for his victims.

An additional difficulty with power for peace theologians such as Yoder and for peace churches that practice this theology, Thistlethwaite observes, is an ecclesiology that gives way to an idealistic but problematic view of the community of faith and the relationships of power present therein:[11]

> A longing for the innocence of paradise in sectarian peace communities is an invitation both to perpetrating abuse and to covering it up. The nature of power is not systemically addressed and is assumed to be amenable to 'person to person' resolution even when there are gross violations and power inequalities. A hierarchy of men and women, couched as biblically-based subordination and domination, facilitates this abusive context. These all co-conspire with an eroticized legacy of attitudes toward women and their sexuality.[12]

That said, Thistlethwaite celebrates the fact that not all Mennonites adhere to this ecclesiology. There are Mennonite women scholars and pastors in North America who have identified some of the problem areas in existing articulations and practices of peace theology. These include a willingness to sacrifice the sanctity of the individual for the good of the community,

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[10] Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield*, 158.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 159.

an ethic of marriage rather than an ethic of sexuality, counting certain sins while excusing others, and neglecting the theological issue of power and the need for a "liberation pacifism" that mandates social and individual transformation to prevent violence and violation against women.[13] Feminist Mennonites who highlight inattention to the intersectional, relational, and ecclesial nature of power in Mennonite peace theology include Cynthia Hess, Marlene Epp, Gayle Gerber Koontz, Carol Penner, Malinda Berry, Lydia Neufeld Harder, Barbara Graber, Lisa Schirch, Dorothy Yoder Nyce, Linda Nyce, Alicia Dueck, and Stephanie Krehbiel.[14]

II

In my attempt to articulate a theory of power for Mennonite peace theology, I too see the need for understanding power to be relational. Such an understanding is essential for naming and subverting violent and dominating power relations in peace theology, because it accounts for how knowledge of bodies is a product of power relationships.[15] Discourses of power are used within oppressive systems to control particular people's bodies and, in doing so, their views of themselves. For example, White culture's depictions of Black people's sexuality as carnal, passionate, and lustful has been crucial to White dominance in America, maligning Black sexuality in order to naturalize White social, political, and economic status.[16] Within a relational understanding of power, there is no such thing as "neutrality" or an "outside"

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[13] Ibid., 158-59.

[14] This list includes those feminist Mennonite scholars whom Thistlethwaite names in referring to Mennonite women who contributed to a 1991 conference held at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Conference papers and responses of these women, and of others she does not name, were published in Elizabeth Yoder, ed., *Peace Theology and Violence against Women* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1992). I use "feminist Mennonite" loosely here to include both scholars claiming a Mennonite faith and a feminist identity, and those having a more complicated relationship with Mennonite theology (e.g., are no longer part of a Mennonite church but remain concerned about its future) and claim a feminist identity.

[15] My understanding of power is informed by philosopher Michel Foucault's articulation of power as the effect of particular configurations of relations and discourses, rather than a thing that can be owned. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

[16] Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 31.

to power, since knowledge itself is a product of discourse, which relates to power.[17] A moral vision of ethical relationships of power comes into effect when power is shared in relationships of mutual dependence, enabling people to be "active and full participants in the decisions and environment that affect their lives," and nurturing community.[18]

A theory of power for Mennonite peace theology must also be intersectional. Intersectionality recognizes that relationships and power dynamics between social locations and processes (e.g., racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, sexism) are linked, and can change over time and differ by geographic setting. Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw originally developed the concept of intersectionality as "a way of framing the various interactions of race and gender in the context of violence against women of color," but recognized its broader potential "as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics."[19] Peace theologians and practitioners should be suspicious of all relationships of unequal power operating within their theologies and biblical interpretations and how they are connected. Otherwise, the root causes of patriarchy will not be fully addressed and deconstructed, making any attempt at peacemaking and liberating for all ultimately ineffective.

Responding to Thistlethwaite's call for a theology of power for Mennonite peace theology, I find inspiration in Jesus' example of embodied relationships of shared power (mutuality), which demonstrate love toward oneself, God, and others. As feminist theologian Beverly Wildung Harrison writes:

> Like Jesus, we are called to a radical activity of love, to a way of being in the world that deepens relation, embodies and extends community, and passes on the gift of life….We are called to confront power that thwarts the power of human personal and communal becoming—that which twists relationship.

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[17] Janice McLaughlin, *Feminist Social and Political Theory: Contemporary Debates and Dialogues* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 118-19.

[18] John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1995), 21.

[19] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 1242 (1990-1991): 1296.

> Jesus' sacrifice was for the cause of radical love—doing justice;
> righting relationship.[20]

Relationships of power rooted in Jesus' radical example are enhanced when power is "shared, reciprocal, and constructed by the limits that respectful interrelationship imposes."[21] In reflecting on biblical understandings of power, Lydia Neufeld Harder claims that the nonviolent power of the cross, which Mennonites emphasize, is not a willingness to accept divine suffering at the hand of a paternal and controlling God, but a willingness to suffer *with* others—an example of divine solidarity with the oppressed.[22] Accordingly, she contends that the power of the resurrection is not dependent on either the power of status and coercion or the power of domination and oppression. Rather, it demonstrates that God's power is creative and subversive.[23] It is the power to heal, to invite, and to bring new life where there is death.[24]

It follows, then, that the power of God embodied in human authority ought to be healing, creative, and subversive. As believers are called to embody the way of Christ, they are called to embody relationships of mutuality and solidarity with those who experience oppression, violence, and injustice.[25] It is the role of the believing community to name and challenge relationships of power that seek to dominate and control, including within and in the name of the church.[26] Together with Harrison and Harder, I maintain that Jesus' suffering and death is normative for Christian ethics. However, I believe it is normative not as a justification for suffering and injustice but as a radical example of divine solidarity with those who suffer. This kind of solidarity must be freely chosen—the result of an uncoerced commitment to a life of faith lived from a belief in Jesus as Lord, not coerced by domination and subordination—in order to be considered discipleship.

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[20] Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics,* ed. Carol S. Robb (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985), 19.

[21] Ibid., 175.

[22] Lydia Neufeld Harder, "Seeking Wisdom in the Face of Foolishness: Toward a Robust Peace Theology" in *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security and the Wisdom of the Cross*, ed. Duane K. Friesen and Gerald W. Schlabach (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005): 117-52.

[23] Harder, *Obedience and Suspicion*, 130.

[24] Ibid., 132.

[25] Ibid., 130-33.

[26] Ibid., 139.

By critically analyzing relationships of power and envisioning God's love as shared power, we increase our potential as disciples of Jesus to reduce violence against women (and all people) and to live more fully into the Kingdom of God here and now. A theory and theology of power must be articulated for Mennonite peace theology, because power exists in all relationships. God, through Jesus, calls believers to be critical of hierarchical (patriarchal) power and to work toward right relationships of shared power. The work of the church is not to renounce all understandings and relationships of power as immoral, but to live into life-giving relationships of power through, for example, a commitment to nonviolence.

Thistlethwaite also claims that Mennonite peace theology must be conscious of whose bodies are most likely to experience violence (those of women, racialized Others, and LGBTQ persons) by applying the concept of "critical physicality." Based on an understanding that "all bodies are not equally accessible for injury" because of race, sexual orientation, size, reproductive organs, religious and cultural meaning, and social location, critical physicality looks at the physicality of particular bodies in order to "witness to the multiple violations of bodies."[27] Critical physicality explores how violence is normalized within a patriarchal system by considering the actual impacts of violence on specific bodies. Thistlethwaite uses critical physicality as a starting point for peace theology and ethics. Mennonites, she argues, should do the same, rather than letting their history as a persecuted people prevent them from seeing the persecuted among them now.

With regard to peace theology, the issue of physicality is related to the issue of power. If gendered, sexualized, and racialized notions of violence and relationships of power (on interpersonal, social, and ecclesial levels) are not deconstructed within Yoder's work, for example, then the significance of physicality and the radical implications for particular persons' bodies are also not being weighed for discipleship ethics. This reduces accountability and authenticity. Disciples of Jesus must look at whose bodies have the most at stake for theology and ethics. For example, women and LGBTQ Mennonites' experiences of suffering and oppression ought to guide conversations and discernment processes about sexual ethics, since their bodies will be disproportionately impacted by the outcomes of these conversations and

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[27] Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield,* 5.

processes.

Thistlethwaite's work is undergirded by a theological affirmation of bodies, which resonates with the Mennonite emphasis on discipleship. God works with and through humans by being present with them as they are, in their physical bodies. Through the incarnation, God became human to be in relationship with humanity. God affirms our created bodies. The concept of discipleship connects the importance of being and doing in the physical bodies of followers of Christ. Yet it is easy to take physicality for granted, especially if one is a representative of the status quo and thus more likely to be disconnected from, or less critical of, one's own body and the social norms and power ascribed to it. What difference does it make that our experiences of the world and of God are contextual and informed by skin color, sexual orientation, reproductive organs, physical and mental ability, and social location? How might discipleship look different, depending on the individual person with a particular physical body and differing relationships of power? By supporting Thistlethwaite's argument for critical physicality as an essential hermeneutic for peace theology, I am not promoting an individualistic form of discipleship, but I am claiming that individual physicality matters for theo-ethical conversations about power and politics.

Theological anthropologies that privilege the experiences of the oppressed assert that "any appeal to empirical or visual in the effort to understand human being is never innocent, never ahistorical, and never divorced from power."[28] It is thus important to specify whose bodies shape our theology. For theologian Shawn Copeland, this means locating theological anthropology in the experiences of suffering bodies. She uses Black women's bodies as a prism "to consider the theological anthropological relation between the social body [which commodifies and exploits] and the physical body."[29] For me, a White Canadian Christian, this means educating myself about, and seeking reconciliation for, the ways my Russian Mennonite ancestors benefited from, and the ways I continue to benefit from,

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[28] M. Shawn Copeland, "The Critical Aesthetics of Race," in *She Who Imagines: Feminist Theological Aesthetics*, ed. Laurie M. Cassidy and Maureen H. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 82.

[29] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 8.

exploitation of the inhabitants of Turtle Island.[30] It also means learning about, and remaining critical of, the ways Mennonite peace theology may shape oppressive notions of particular embodied subjects. How, for example, are indigenous bodies made absent and present? Does a theology of obedience, articulated primarily by White men, deal adequately with racial inequality so that it does not inadvertently promote the suffering of racialized others in the name of Christ? For, as Copeland states, "a social body [or theology] determined by the arbitrary privileged position and, therefore, power of one group may enact subtle and grotesque brutality upon different 'others.'"[31]

In "Colourful Differences and Imago Dei," feminist theologian and ethicist Marilyn Legge adds that "the insistence on similarities among us— by theological anthropologies which are based on an ahistorical, acultural, disembodied essential humanity—functions to deny actual relations of domination and subordination and serves to perpetuate the invisibility of many people's lives."[32] A focus on the physical and material impacts of actions on particular bodies helps us see the connections between war and racial, gendered, and sexualized violence, and better equips us to dismantle interlocking networks and systems of violence.

Thistlethwaite calls on Mennonite peace theology to deconstruct its tendency to eroticize violence against certain bodies (e.g., women's bodies, queer bodies) and to build in its place an understanding of the erotic as believed and embodied desire for justice and peace (i.e., love in action) for all bodies. Given its inadequate attention to the systemic nature of power, Thistlethwaite argues that the emphasis on subordination and obedience in Mennonite peace theology is responsible for normalizing violence in some forms (male over female, heterosexual or homosexual, white over black).[33] A theology of obedience is not safe for those with less power in a relationship of unequal power and privilege. It simply reinforces the status quo. For example, Mennonite peace theology, Thistlethwaite claims, and I agree, has not adequately named violence against women and queer persons

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[30] Turtle Island is the name given to North America by its indigenous peoples.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Marilyn J. Legge, "Colourful Differences: Otherness and Image of God for Canadian Feminist Theologies," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21, no. 1 (1992): 67-80, 72.
[33] Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield*, 105.

as violence, nor has it sought peacemaking in these relationships in the church's lived practices. This, she argues, is attributable to two major factors. The first is the idealism of its ecclesiology, which assumes it is possible for believers to live into the Kingdom of God here and now and therefore is not realistic about, and not suspicious of, patriarchal relationships of power within the community of faith.[34] The second is inattention to patriarchal relationships of power. Erotic peacemaking, on the other hand, "engage[s] critical consciousness about the way gender, sex, and race privilege have not only fundamentally structured war making, but will be embedded in creative attempts to reframe peacemaking in Western culture."[35]

Reclaiming the erotic for Mennonite peace theology, then, means resisting all violence in all relationships by working in concrete, material ways for right relationships of mutuality as part of what it means to be disciples of Jesus. Competing claims in our churches about what constitutes violence—with the eroticization or denial of some forms of violence as a result of masculinist and heteronormative articulations of peace theology based on an ideal vision of mutual subordination and promotion of suffering as Christ suffered, but without a theology of power to differentiate just suffering from unjust suffering—holds women and LGBTQ Mennonites captive. Peace theology must promote peace as possible only in relationships of shared power, including gendered and sexual relationships. Peace theology must articulate what shared power and mutuality look like with regard to sexual relationships, for example, and must support everyone in "finding the positive power of our own being as sexual persons."[36]

In sum, Thistlethwaite criticizes Mennonite peace theology for its inattention to violence against women, and calls on all Mennonites to consider how power functions, to subvert relationships of dominating power, to employ critical physicality, and to disconnect the social construction of desire from violence (power over) in order to reconstruct erotic desire as desire for justice and peace (shared power). I affirm her call and suggest that Mennonite peace theology adopt:

1. An intersectional theory of power in relation and a theology

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[34] Ibid., 157.
[35] Ibid., 172.
[36] Harrison, *Making the Connections,* 114.

of shared power.

2. A theological anthropology that privileges the experiences of suffering bodies.

3. Erotic peacemaking as that which elicits desire for relationships of shared power and cultivates each person's positive power as a sexual being.

By incorporating these changes, the potential of Mennonite peace theology to be a valued partner in conversations about peace and justice related to gendered, racialized, and sexualized violence increases dramatically. As well, Mennonite peace theology can become more effective in working toward ending the violence of war since, as Thistlethwaite effectively argues, gendered, racialized, and sexualized violence are tools of war.[37] These constructive changes are rooted in a reflection of God's love and desire for relationships of peace and justice, which the church is called to embody. A Christian commitment to peace is not a commitment to peace in some relationships but not in others; it is a commitment to peace in all relationships.

Kimberly L. Penner is Adjunct Instructor at Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology and Research Fellow at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

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[37] See, for example, Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield*, 26-27.

"My Peace I give to you, not like the world gives": Peace and the Multi-varied Wisdom of God

Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld

I

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled,
and do not let them be afraid.
(John 14:27)

This Johannine text has been appearing at the bottom of recent Christian Peacemaker Teams e-mails. We might be surprised, since peace-oriented Anabaptist Mennonites typically prefer Luke's Jesus, the poverty worker and peace activist, or Matthew's preacher of the Sermon on the Mount, to John's divine "mystic." Paul is often deemed even less "Anabaptist." With the exception of the great peace hymn in Eph. 2:14-16 or his trenchant words regarding the "powers," Paul's conceptualizing the "gospel of peace" as first and foremost reconciliation with and by God seems increasingly distant from much of our peace discourse.

Jarring in another sense is the Johannine text's positing of a stark dissonance between peace as offered by Jesus and as offered by "the world." Does such a harsh distinction fit contemporary Mennonite understandings of peace and peacebuilding? I wish to respond to this question by exploring the Bible's wisdom tradition. As I will show, that tradition is highly variegated, marked by deep tensions, even fissures, but also by a tension-filled unity. As such, it can shed light on the likewise variegated and tension-filled Anabaptist Mennonite understandings of peace. Moreover, it holds the promise of drawing together what often wants to come apart.

I will begin by acknowledging with deep gratitude the courage, passion, creativity, and wisdom that has marked recent decades of Mennonite peacebuilding. Only a few short decades ago, Mennonite public engagement for peace was mostly restricted to refusing to take up arms, either in self-

defence or in service to the state. Even though we called it "our peace position," we spoke less of peace than of conscientious objection or of nonresistance. "Peace" would more likely have referred to having "peace with God." In fact, many Mennonites, including influential teachers and writers, were explicitly suspicious of the "worldly" (my word) political objectives and aggressive methods of peacemakers we today revere, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.[1] This aspect of the Mennonite peace tradition no doubt instilled a peaceable communal character of humility and solidarity with those in need, most especially with those within the household of faith.[2] At the same time, the church/world dichotomy made it difficult to know whether and how to engage the violence of the world, and also often masked the presence of violence, physical and systemic, in home and congregation.

Things have changed dramatically in recent years, as has been well documented.[3] The separated ones of yesteryear have become determinedly "worldly," taking cues from Jeremiah's famous letter calling on the exiles in Babylon to "seek the shalom of the city" (Jer. 29:7).[4] The reactive stance of refusing to take up arms has given way to peace*making*, and then peace*building*, that is, to a decidedly active stance. "Peace" is thus typically paired with "justice" (as in Fernando Enns's "just peace" or Glen Stassen's

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[1] E.g., Guy F. Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1946), 220. For debate among Mennonites regarding the civil rights movement, see Tobin Miller Shearer, *Daily Demonstrators: The Civil Rights Movement in Mennonite Homes and Sanctuaries* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2010).

[2] E.g., the founding of Mennonite Central Committee in 1920.

[3] See, for instance, John R. Burkholder, "Peace," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (1989), www.gameo.org/index.php?title=Peace&oldid=134475, accessed August 15, 2016; Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA/Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1996); Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, "Varieties of Contemporary Mennonite Peace Witness: From Passivism to Pacifism, from Nonresistance to Resistance," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 243-57; John D. Roth, "The Emergence of Mennonite Peacebuilding in an International Perspective: Global Anabaptism and Neo-Anabaptism," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (2015): 229-52.

[4] This highly influential *Leitmotif* was introduced into Mennonite peace discourse by John Howard Yoder. See John Howard Yoder, "See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun," in *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 51-78; reprinted in John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 183-204.

"just peacemaking"[5]), which too is conceptualized as social activism. Such peacemaking takes in wide-ranging resistance to violence, war, injustice, and oppression, from the domestic realm to the public realm, but more importantly finds expression in positive engagement—hence "peace*building*." Let me illustrate briefly with some examples. Mennonites have been highly influential pioneers in restorative justice.[6] At the instigation of Ron Sider in his famous Mennonite World Conference address at the Assembly in Strasbourg in 1986,[7] we have been "getting in the way" of hostilities and standing in solidarity with victims as Christian Peacemaker Teams, deliberately collaborating with those who do not share the Christian faith.[8] We have responded to sexual abuse with increasing determination, most especially within the context of the church.[9] In short, Mennonites have contributed to an exponentially expanding fund of practical and theoretical knowledge in conflict analysis and transformation, which we then teach in peace studies programs at Mennonite institutions and beyond. In short, Mennonites have deliberately become "worldly" in peacemaking and peace teaching. This is to be celebrated, I believe, as integral to what the Bible calls "wisdom."[10]

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[5] E.g., Fernando Enns and Annette Mosher, eds., *Just Peace: Ecumenical, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013); Glen Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); Glen Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008).

[6] The contributors to this field, in both practice and writing, are too numerous to cite. Two of the most influential pioneers are Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Scottdale, PA/Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1990), and John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation: Clear Articulation of the Guiding Principles by a Pioneer in the Field* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003).

[7] Ron Sider, "God's People Reconciling," address to the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Strasbourg, 1986, www.cpt.org/resources/writings/sider.

[8] See the overview of the history and development of CPT, as well as a literature review of writings by CPTers in Alain Epp Weaver, "'Getting in the Way' or 'Being-With': Missiologies in Tension in the Work of Christian Peacemaker Teams," *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 19 (2011): 260-77.

[9] The case of John Howard Yoder is most notorious, given his singular role in Mennonite peace theology. See the whole issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (January 2015).

[10] Illustrative of this deliberate and increasingly confident "worldliness" is *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross*, ed. Duane K. Friesen and

II

Biblical wisdom is not a homogeneous tradition, or even a literary genre. It encompasses Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and many of the psalms, but also the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus (or Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach) and the Wisdom of Solomon, and shapes a good deal of the New Testament as well. Followers of Jesus drew heavily on the wisdom tradition to articulate their convictions about Jesus, his mission, and his identity. The wisdom tradition carries within it all of the tensions and contradictions of real life.[11]

With respect to "worldly" peacemaking as reflective of biblical wisdom, we note especially in Israel's proverbial wisdom a profound, if discriminating, openness to the manifold learnings from human experience.[12] Such openness is informed by the fundamental conviction that this world has been created with and by Wisdom[13] who permeates "all things" (Prov. 8:22-31; Wis. Sol. 7:15-8:1). Not surprisingly, the popular and courtly wisdom of Egypt, Babylon, and Greece thus left its fingerprints all over this practically and experientially oriented wisdom in the Bible. Important for us as heirs to a separatist and nonconformist tradition is to recognize that this aspect of biblical wisdom provides both context and precedent for the wisdom of our present-day peacebuilders, theoreticians, and teachers, who both contribute to and learn from the wisdom of "the world." We may not have Solomon to whom we can attribute such wisdom, as the Bible typically does, but we do have a growing number of peace sages whose impact is felt far beyond

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Gerald W. Schlabach (Scottdale, PA/Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2005). Immediately relevant to our present focus is Lydia Harder, "Seeking Wisdom in the Face of Foolishness: Toward a Robust Peace Theology," in ibid., 117-52.

[11] Among countless introductions to biblical wisdom, see my introductions in *Ephesians. Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottdale, PA/Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2002), 362-64, and *Recovering Jesus: the Witness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 317-25.

[12] "Discriminating" because wisdom was conceived not only as the architect of creation (Prov. 3:19; 8:22-31), but also as Torah personified (Sirach 24), that is, a cosmic embrace running up against the specificity of Torah. This necessarily invited a constant process of discernment among the wise, accompanied inevitably by sometimes fierce debate—akin to the debates among Mennonites regarding the nature of peace.

[13] With a suggestive touch of whimsy, Wisdom (Hebrew: *hochmah*; Greek: *sophia*) was personified as God's first creation, daughter, and 'master architect' of creation (see esp. Prov. 8:30; cf. Wis. Sol. 7).

the Mennonite and broader church community. There is profound biblical/theological warrant for such engagement.

Israel's variegated wisdom tradition contains unresolved, indeed unresolvable, tensions. This too is relevant to our peacemaking. Proverbial and practical wisdom, rooted in everyday experience and responsibility, with its clear sense of justice tied to cause and effect, and thus to a rather straightforward calculus of punishment and reward, stands in stark contrast to the tired cynicism of the Preacher (Qohelet/Ecclesiastes) or Job's obstinate protest against incomprehensible, unprovoked, and unjust suffering. That too is wisdom, rooted in human experience, only grappling now with the foundation-shattering mystery of implacable suffering of the righteous or innocent.

Let me suggest that our peacebuilding efforts, most particularly our pedagogy, have in the past half-century less in common with Qohelet and Job than with the more confident and optimistic wisdom of Proverbs and Sirach. Such recent efforts appear to be largely informed by the conviction that violence, war, and injustice can and will give way to peace through better information, education, and strategies, and that enlightened efforts at peacebuilding will be rewarded by success.[14]

To be sure, not all Mennonites have shared this confidence. For example, the older Mennonite ethic of nonresistance, forged in experiences of oppression and violence, was grounded both in the expectation of divine vindication of the faithful and in a clear distinction of church and world. It was aligned with a very bleak view of a "fallen" world and sinful human beings, who would and *could* know no peace apart from divine redemption in Christ. Such a stance has some affinity with the darker strain of wisdom in Ecclesiastes, with regard to what can be expected from efforts to change the world through education and more enlightened strategies. Further, many working for peace have had their efforts repeatedly stymied by spiritually and culturally deeply-rooted systemic violence and oppression. Christian

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[14] The mission statements of peace studies programs at Mennonite colleges and universities, as presented on their websites, illustrate this abundantly. Indeed, the rapid expansion of such programs, well beyond the Mennonite or religious community, is in no small measure related to the optimism of the past decades that society is on a trajectory toward less violence and more peace, an optimism strained by the rise of xenophobic and militaristic populism.

Peacemaker Teams have thus placed great stress on spirituality and prayer as sustaining peacemaking in contexts where the odds are stacked against their efforts—which they typically are.[15]

More broadly, the rise in our day of authoritarian populism, notably in Europe and North America—symptom and cause alike of ignorance, impotence, anger, and fear—may be a harbinger of a future in which the optimistic wisdom that has marked our peace activism, advocacy, and teaching in the past half-century is met with incomprehension, even hostility, rather than receptivity—including from Christians. This is sure to force peace-oriented Mennonites into the kind of crisis that biblical wisdom itself experienced in the face of unremitting violence and oppression, and the shattering of confidence in the connection of effort and success. We may be revisiting the wisdom of our forebears—biblical, Anabaptist, and Mennonite—and rediscover that suffering is a close companion to peaceableness.

Are we prepared for this, not just personally but theologically and ideologically? Are our peace study programs preparing us for a world in which violence, war, and oppression are gaining ground? Do we give thought to what might sustain hope and commitment to peacemaking in such a world? It is, of course, a world in which many of our sisters and brothers in the faith already live out their commitment to peace, whether we think of the violence visited upon vulnerable minorities in our cities, upon First Nations in North America, or upon our sisters in brothers in war- and oppression-torn areas.[16]

There is yet another strain of wisdom, visible for Christians in greatest relief in the wisdom writings we know as the "New Testament." It is a wisdom of hope amidst despair, of faith and trust in the face of doubt, of love amidst hostility, of violence subverted through suffering, of deliberate vulnerability[17] as combat against "the powers." It is a wisdom of baffling patience, persistent

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[15] Epp Weaver, "'Getting in the Way' or 'Being-With,'" 260-77; see also the trenchant observations by C. Arnold Snyder, growing out of his directing Witness for Peace in Nicaragua: "The Relevance of Anabaptist Nonviolence for Nicaragua Today," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 123-37.

[16] Roth, "The Emergence of Mennonite Peacebuilding," 246-52.

[17] Might this be a more fitting way of capturing *Wehrlosigkeit* (defencelessness) as a chosen stance than "nonresistance"?

hope, and urgent anticipation—eschatological confidence and flexibility, all at once. Such wisdom is participation in the patient love of the creator, expressed most fully in Jesus.

The connection between wisdom and Jesus is critical for us. Much of the NT's portrait and narrative of Jesus is drawn from Israel's rich and variegated wisdom tradition.[18] Jesus is a peaceable sage, speaking in parables and aphorisms, many of them proverb-like, drawing on and illuminating everyday human experience. He appears announcing the reign of God, inviting people into a relationship of trust and intimacy with God, evoking the striking words from Wisdom 7:27, where "in every generation [Wisdom/ *Sophia*] enters holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets." The narrators of Jesus' life go so far as to identify him explicitly with the personified wisdom of Proverbs 8 and 9, as well as Sirach 6 and 24, where Wisdom/Hochma/Sophia created the world and loves to hang out with humanity, incarnating God's gracious Torah. When Jesus is accused of having too good a time associating with sinners as a drunk and glutton, Matthew has him counter: "Wisdom is vindicated by all her deeds!" (Matt. 11:19;[19] cf. Luke 7:35). John's narrative begins with a wisdom poem of the *Logos*. It could just as easily have been of *Sophia*. Like Wisdom in Proverbs 8, *Logos* is intimately identified with God from before creation; indeed, it is through *Logos* that all things were created (John 1:1-4). This theme is no less forcefully present in the great christological (or sophiological) hymn in Colossians 1:15-20, where Christ is the one through whom all things in heaven and earth, including the powers, have come into being.

I draw attention to this nexus of Jesus-wisdom-creation to show that NT writers saw in Jesus a Messiah, a liberator, but just as much a wisdom that is world-generating, world-friendly, and world-befriending. By confessing Jesus as *Sophia* incarnate, the poor Galilean village teacher and healer is linked to both Torah and creation, to all that God demands of humanity (e.g., Matt. 5:17; 11:25-30; cf. Sirach 6:18-37; Sirach 24), and to all creation in its endless variety ("all things," Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:10). This is what James,

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[18] Instead of christology (or messiology), we might, given the prominence of wisdom (*sophia*) in relation to Jesus, also speak of "sophiology." It is not an exaggeration to speak of Jesus as Wisdom incarnate (logos/Sophia becoming flesh; Matt. 11:19; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 1:23-24).
[19] Compare also Matt.11:28-30 with Sirach 6:23-29.

in the letter linked by tradition to Jesus' brother, calls the "wisdom from above," a wisdom that is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of justice is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:17-18). Creation, peace, and justice are intimately connected both in scope and purpose, and are fully expressed in the love of God in Christ, as Paul would put it (e.g., Rom. 5:1-11).

To link the biblical tradition of Wisdom as engaged in creation, at home in the world, and "delighting in the human race" (Prov. 8:31), with the Jesus of John 1 and Colossians 1, provides strong warrant for followers of Jesus to see their passion for peacebuilding as nothing less than participation in the Creator's love for, and delight in, the world and its inhabitants.

I return to the complexity of the wisdom tradition. Just as there is a collision between the practical optimism of Proverbs and Sirach and the disorienting wisdom of Job and Ecclesiastes, so there is a collision in the NT between *Sophia/Logos'* joyful creation of the world and its inhabitants, on one hand, and the reception she/he receives when coming to "what was his own" (John 1:11; cf. in contrast Sirach 24), on the other. *Logos* is not welcomed but met with lethal resistance to the offer of peace—death by torture on a cross. Just prior to being executed, Luke's Jesus looks down on Jerusalem, weeping, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:41). Jesus' lament echoes that other weeping prophet, Jeremiah:

> *They have treated the wound of my people carelessly,*
> *saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.* (Jer. 6:14; 8:11)

In the eye of evangelists and apostles, the killing of Jesus was nothing less than rejection of divine Wisdom. Jesus as both emissary and enactor of peace was brutally rebuffed. These sages reached back to the wisdom trope of the suffering righteous one who falls victim to the violent and callous.[20] Importantly, that sapiential story line also contains the promise of divine vindication of the innocent righteous one, along with retribution on his

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[20] Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and quite possibly Wisdom of Solomon 2, among other texts, have left their mark on how evangelists shape their passion narratives. See also Acts 3:14, 7:52.

tormentors.[21] But that is exactly what did not happen in the case of Jesus.[22] Yes, the righteous one was raised, and thus vindicated. But what about his tormentors?

It is precisely here that we begin to plumb the depth of the "gospel of peace."[23] The most intense moment of rejection becomes the most intense moment of reconciliation. The crucifixion of the messenger and enactor of peace comes to stand not for the defeat of peace, but for its greatest enactment (Eph. 2:14-16). As Paul rightly recognizes, this is scandalous, conventional-wisdom-shattering craziness, where the violence of the human rejecting of peace becomes the divine making of peace. But he recognizes too that in this moment Wisdom shows herself at her wiliest. Listen to his taunt: "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [. . .] Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1:20-25). However crazy in the eyes of "the world," the cross is nothing less than the saving [peacemaking] power of God (1 Cor. 1:18; cf. Rom. 5:6-11).

Such divine foolishness, such "wisdom from above," is not captured by system or theory, but is expressed best in poetry and hymnody. The great hymn at the center of Eph. 2:11-22, one of the greatest peace texts in the Scriptures,[24] speaks of Jesus as "*our* peace," where "our" always means "of us *and* our enemies." Jesus comes as an evangelist of peace and as a maker of

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[21] See, e.g., Wis. Sol. 2-5.

[22] Compare, e.g., the parable of the vineyard or "wicked tenants" in Matt. 21:33-46 (parallels Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), which is placed within the passion context precisely to sharpen the surprise.

[23] Acts 10:36; Eph. 2:17, 6:15. The "gospel of peace" must not be taken as shorthand for an Anabaptist stress on peacemaking and pacifism. As consistent as such peaceableness is with the gospel of peace, that gospel runs deeper and wider in scope. The "gospel of peace" is synonymous with the more frequent "gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 1 Thess. 2:8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:17), "gospel of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 4:4, 9:13; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:2), or the "gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). While current in Roman political propaganda, its use in the NT is consistent with, and arguably dependent on, Isa. 52:7.

[24] See my explorations of this text in Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians,* 106-37, and "'For he is our peace': Ephesians 2:11-22," in *Beautiful upon the Mountains: Biblical Essays on Mission, Peace, and the Reign of God*, ed. Mary H. Schertz and Ivan Friesen (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies/Scottdale, PA, Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2003), 215-33; also Ulrich Mauser, *The Gospel of Peace: A Scriptural Message for Today's World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 151-65.

peace (2:13-16)—indeed, as Peace personified (2:14). But he makes peace, reconciling hostile and estranged persons and groups, and between them all and God, by "killing enmity" (Revised English Bible), murdering hostility through his own murder on the cross (2:16). He makes peace, moreover, by creating a "new human" in one body, where new creation and raising to life becomes the reward not simply of the righteous but of "us and our enemies," liberated together by grace (cf. also 2:1-10).

This is wisdom against wisdom, divine craziness against the "wisdom of the world." This is peace against peace; justice against justice; gospel against gospel. Such wisdom does not fit the cause-and-effect kind of wisdom that pervades analysis and strategy, nor the "eye-for-an-eye" wisdom, in which the law of *talion* is employed to restore order after harm. It decidedly does not share in Qohelet's skepticism. The wisdom of the cross makes sense only in light of the creator's love for recalcitrant humanity.[25] Such wisdom is ingenuity, driven not by stratagems and theories but by fathomless love for creation, a love so fierce it is willing to pay any price. This is truly just peace, true restorative justice, a peace that not only reconciles but recreates godless sinners into a new humanity (Eph. 2:15), into the justice of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

How much is such wisdom—scandalous, suffering, self-giving, and life-giving to enemies—intrinsic and essential to our peacebuilding and teaching? We should ask ourselves as Mennonites committed to peace whether we still hear in the call to peacemaking the call to take up "our" cross (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) or to preach a crucified Messiah (1 Cor. 2:2)? Is the anticipated surprise of resurrection a premise of our peacebuilding? Or does our passion for better methods and strategies of peacebuilding have the potential to blind us to the *miracle* of love, which will always be scandalously patient, ravenously urgent, hopeful beyond hope, and ingenious as only love can be? Is it possible that our commitment to nonviolence can become an ideological blinder to the wonder of the wisdom

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[25] Cf. Wis. Sol. 11:20-12:2; Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 5:6-11; cf. Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, "Power, Love, and Creation: The Mercy of the Divine Warrior in the Wisdom of Solomon," in *Peace and Justice Shall Embrace: Power and Theopolitics in the Bible*, ed. Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns (Telford, PA: Pandora Press US, 1999), 174-91.

of the cross, the wonder of divine foolishness "in Christ"?[26] I do not intend to suggest here that we should be any less committed to nonviolence, or that we should not deepen and expand the wisdom of experience in practical peacebuilding, and eagerly offer such wisdom to others. These commitments are clearly in the spirit of seeking the shalom of the city. However, I am concerned that cross and resurrection, so essential to any biblical account of the gospel of peace, not be forgotten: more, that this gospel serve as the motivation, vision, and deep content of our peacemaking.

I anticipate the objection that this is *Christian* tradition, too specific, and in its claims too exclusivist—too hegemonic, even—for the "worldly" context in which we wish to build peace. After all, we did not invent peace and justice, nor do we own them. As true as that is, it was no less true in the time of Jesus. Jews, Greeks, and Romans all knew peace: for Jews it meant the end of Roman occupation; or the end of hunger and disease; or the reestablishment of the royal house of David; or, more broadly, the establishment of God's kingdom, cleansed of godless sinners. For Romans peace meant the subjugation of restive peoples to the vaunted *pax Romana*, an empire unthreatened by internal and external enemies. The Roman "gospel" was peace premised on superior power and cultural hegemony—"peace and security," as Paul references the imperial slogan (1 Thess. 5:3). Greeks and Romans went so far as to deify Peace/Pax/Eirene as a goddess. And they

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[26] In part because of the commitment to peace and nonviolence, Mennonites have often privileged the NT at the expense of an appreciation of the whole canon. More recently, commitment to nonviolence has subjected the NT itself to critique and large swaths of it to disuse. Recently atonement, most particularly as centered on the cross, has become the focus of intense debate. E.g., Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); Ted Grimsrud, *Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story and Our Hope for Wholeness* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013); Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, eds., *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Willard M. Swartley, ed., *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press US/Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000); J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 73-96.

certainly all knew justice: for Jews, reward and punishment premised on adherence to God's will; for Romans, a notion of blind impartiality that still shapes much of our judicial and legal system.

Thus, when our biblical forebears in the faith employed terms like "peace," "justice," and "gospel," they were employing terminology already at home in the wider world. They intended thereby not only to find common ground with their interlocutors, but to challenge "peace as the world gives it." When they used terms like "peacemaker" in close proximity to "son of God," as they did for Jesus and for his followers (cf. Matt 5:9), they both mimicked and challenged Caesar's claim to those cherished descriptors. Are we content to employ "peace" as given to us by "the world"? Or is our terminology, our meaning, informed by the wisdom of the cross—more broadly, by "the gospel of peace"?

There will undoubtedly be contexts in which a full understanding of peace informed by biblically grounded faith may need to be muted or placed in the very fine print, because it might not fit or be intelligible. Tragically, it may at times be unintelligible in relation to peace because of betrayal by a church that has used the cross as weapon. We may thus need to talk of peace and justice in Esperanto, as it were. We may have to let our actions—peace*making*, peace*building*—do our talking for us. Regardless of context, "seeking the peace of the city" places witness at the center of our peacebuilding. Translation is thus unavoidable; more, it is our calling.[27] The more problematic the contexts of our peacebuilding, the greater the urgency not to forget our "first language,"[28] which knows peaceable justice and just peace as centered in the Wisdom coming in the peacemaking, peace-teaching, crucified, and resurrected Christ. Such particularity of content dare not get lost in translation. After all, the Christ who is "our Peace" is also the world's peace. That is what the identification of Jesus with wisdom tells us. The memory of such wisdom, even when not always fully articulable "out there," and never without translation, is nurtured in prayer, worship, and

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[27] John Howard Yoder repeatedly stressed the missiological dimension of such "bi-lingualism," as in "See How they Go with Their Face to the Sun" (note 4 above).

[28] This point has been made repeatedly by many Mennonite scholars. For examples, see Ted Koontz, "Thinking Theologically about War against Iraq," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 77 (2003): 93-108; Duane K. Friesen, "In Search of Security: A Theology and Ethic of Peace and Public Order," in Friesen and Schlabach, *At Peace and Unafraid*, 55.

shared confession. Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood this when, during the darkest days of the Third Reich, he spoke in his secret seminary and wrote in his letters from prison of *Arkandisziplin*, the secret disciplines the church has resorted to in times of persecution.[29]

Israel's sages traded in the terminology and ideas of their captors, whether Egypt, Babylon, or Rome. But every time they identified wisdom with Torah (as in Sirach 24), even when they spoke "exilic," they were reminding themselves of who they were, who their God was, and the true nature of Wisdom. Just so, we today may "seek the *shalom* of the city" (Jer. 29) and talk the language of "Babylon," offering the very best of our insights and abilities to a receptive world—as we should. But every time we identify *Jesus* as the wisdom of God, we remind ourselves at the same time that we are to share in the love of the creator for this world in all its wonder and brokenness, and of the cross as the "foolish" means of peace. Both together constitute the deep wisdom that comes into force most particularly when our peace efforts are resisted.

III

In conclusion, we should be endlessly grateful for a biblical canon that has bound into one volume the many facets of wisdom, the multi-varied wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10)—wisdom(s) arising out of contexts of great receptivity, positive "worldly" experience, but also out of times of abject despair, apparent failure, and lethal resistance. Most important, the canon contains the wisdom that appears to make no sense, namely, the deliberate vulnerability of divine *Sophia*, the Creator's love at its most intense and cunning, willing to give her very self to and for her enemies in order to restore her beloved creation. Such peaceable wisdom may not be *of* the world, but it is *for* the world (John 3:16-17).

To recognize the great diversity of wisdom(s) in the biblical canon is not to say that there is a wisdom for all seasons, that one can pick and choose from the store of wisdom as one deems fitting. It is rather to recognize that this variegated tradition emerges out of often clashing perspectives

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[29] "Arcane" or "secret" discipline. Bonhoeffer in letters of April 30 and May 5, 1944. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. John W. de Gruchy, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 8 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 361, 371.

and radically different life settings and experiences. We should thus not be surprised to find very real and deep tensions within and between the strands of biblical wisdom, as noted in this survey. Could it be that the sometimes tension-filled differences within the Mennonite community as to what truly constitutes peace—tensions between "Evangelicals" and "Anabaptists," between evangelists and peacebuilders, between theologians and practitioners, between conservatives and progressives, between those with access to power and opportunity and those who have suffered violence— mirror the tensions within the multi-varied wisdom of God? The inclusion in our one canon of Scripture of such diversity ensures that some arguments will not be settled, and should not be. This is also the case with respect to the varied perspectives on peace among us.

The Talmud records ongoing argumentation not as a sign of hermeneutical failure but as lively evidence of Torah's presence with real people in real places and times.[30] Perhaps as Mennonites we need to be more Talmudic in our thinking about and teaching of peace. Our own places in the world vary greatly, as do our opportunities to engage it. The arenas of conflict, oppression, and injustice vary, as do our explanations and perspectives of the roots of the absence of peace. Theological accents sometimes make it difficult to understand each other. Such is the wonder and challenge of the body of Christ. It is the one who is "our Peace" (Eph. 2:14) who has tethered us to each other with "chains of peace," to render Eph. 4:3 quite literally. We should honor that calling by engaging each other on what constitutes peace and how to build it, and by seeing such engagement, even when conflictual, as evidence of Peace at work. The "yeshiva of peace" will and *should* be a noisy place, filled with peace activists, justice advocates, social scientists, politicians, theologians, ethicists, Bible students and scholars, preachers, pastors, evangelists, and everyone else who confesses Christ to be "our Peace." Our syllabi—both actual and metaphorical—will and should vary, from the problem of war to all the "-isms" that alienate, oppress, and destroy, to the positive challenge of shalom in relation to the earth, and, finally, to agendas now typically marginalized or even seen as entirely outside

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[30] See David A. Frank, "Arguing with God, Talmudic Discourse, and the Jewish Countermodel: Implications for the Study of Argumentation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 41 (Fall 2004): 71-86.

the purview of peace discourse: church planting, evangelism, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or, to put it in theological categories, soteriology, ecclesiology, and missiology. After all, "our Peace" saw the social dimensions of peace and justice, the restoration of relationship with God, and the birth of a community of peace as one seamless whole. Should not the curricula of our yeshiva be striving for such seamlessness too?[31]

There is and must be room for a division of labor. Not everyone can or should work at peace in the same fashion. Our practice of peacebuilding and our reflections on it need to be hospitable and attentive to a diversity of sages and practitioners, gifted variously by the same Spirit. But just as the facets or dimensions of biblical wisdom rub up against each other in often conflictual fashion, so there is room for argument and disagreement, for productive meddling in each other's spheres of competence. For this to be realized, for our disputes and vigorous arguments to contribute to and build peace, we need the shared experience of worship, prayer, and confession of Jesus the Christ, Jesus *Sophia*. The task for all of us, then, is to remember the "gospel of peace" and from whom we receive it:

> *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld is professor emeritus of Religious Studies and of Peace and Conflict Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario.

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[31] We can be grateful for the many Mennonites who have modeled such seamlessness— peacebuilder activist-theologians like John Paul Lederach, Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, Ron Sider, and Howard Zehr, to name just a few, who in their writing, teaching, and building peace have taught us the art of knitting.

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace:
A Fresh Ecumenical Approach in the Violent Context of Colombia

Fernando Enns and Andrés Pacheco Lozano

Introduction

The Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Busan, South Korea (2013) will go down in the annals of the ecumenical movement as the one that made a decision to blaze a new trail: an ecumenical "Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" (hereafter, often PJP). In so doing the Assembly chose a new comprehensive approach that, especially for churches of the ecumenical fellowship, brings together into one coherent relationship the many different activities and dimensions of the ecumenical movement. The new approach (1) aims to build on the paradigm of "Just Peace" developed during the international Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, in which the Historic Peace Churches played an influential role; and (2) adds and stresses the *spiritual* dimension to peacebuilding with justice—indicated by the metaphor of "pilgrimage."

From a Mennonite perspective, it is important to test the theological foundations of this fresh ecumenical approach. Does the pilgrimage metaphor uncover a deeper theological wisdom in the church's call to peacemaking? And what might the practical implications be for situations of conflict? Does the pilgrimage approach resonate with practical experience in peacemaking? Traditionally, Mennonites have been sceptical about theological and philosophical reasoning when it is not obvious how it relates to human life.

In this article, our goal is to present some tentative answers to these questions. Fernando Enns, who represents Dutch and German Mennonites in the WCC, is involved in further development of the PJP, chairing the WCC's Reference Group. He is supervising the doctoral project of Andrés Pacheco Lozano, a Mennonite from Colombia who works with communities there that have developed wisdom on reconciliation during a long-term

violent struggle. Research for the project basically follows the questions noted above.[1] Here, we will look into the experience of a *campesino*[2] (farmer) community. In the process of exploring possible resonances of the PJP in a local context, we will reflect on how doing peace theology from a Mennonite perspective could be challenged or enriched by the pilgrimage metaphor. We briefly describe the emergence of the PJP and how Mennonites played a role in the process, describe the context of Colombia as an example of conflict needing to be addressed by the ecumenical fellowship, and show how a Trinitarian approach supports the theological rooting of a transformative spirituality. We test those insights against a given context of injustice and violence, the *campesino* community of El Garzal.

Peace and Justice in the Ecumenical Movement—Latest Developments
Mennonites are one of the smaller communions in the WCC, and only three Mennonite Churches—from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany, and The Netherlands—are full members of it. Nevertheless, during the past decades Mennonites have had a great impact on the WCC, together with other Historic Peace Churches (the Society of Friends and the Church of the Brethren), reminding other churches of the central call of the gospel to be peacemakers. Two contributions of the Historic Peace Churches have been especially important: (1) the centrality of peace in Jesus' ministry, and how this traditionally Christocentric approach helps in recognizing that peace(making) is a constitutive part of what it means to be the Church; and (2) the focus on a *praxis* of peacemaking, highlighting the need for conflict

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[1] The preliminary title of the research is "The Pilgrimage of Reconciliation: Addressing Broken Relationships in Colombia." The goal is to explore the resonance of the proposed PJP when placed in dialogue with communities in Colombia, focusing on the challenges of reconciliation in a deeply divided society. To do so, a series of workshops (stations of the pilgrimage) is proposed for walking with the groups, reading biblical texts with the communities to aid in reflection, and collecting the wisdom of these groups. A dialogue between these communities (their theologies) and the theological/ethical framework of the PJP is the main contribution of the research. Many comments and quotations appearing in the present article come from this larger project.

[2] The term *campesino* in Spanish could be translated as "farmer" or "peasant" in English. But these terms do not entirely capture the meaning. A *campesino* is not just a certain social/economic role or activity but it is also, and even more essentially, a lifestyle, shaped by a deep connection with the land. Thus, we use the Spanish term to preserve this distinctive meaning.

transformation/resolution and for nonviolent actions. In turn, these peace churches have grown stronger in their peace theology and their identity by sitting at the ecumenical table, challenged constantly by the different views of other Christian traditions.[3]

The WCC Assembly in Busan was strongly inspired by the global Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, initiated by Mennonites in the WCC, and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica in 2011, which marked the culmination of that decade.[4] "Just Peace"—a new ecumenical paradigm for doing theological ethics—was further developed and discussed during the Busan assembly.[5] One of the constant critiques expressed in the Decade to Overcome Violence was the lack of theological depth on the one hand and a missing link to the spiritual life of the churches on the other. At times, church representatives (especially from the Orthodox Churches) complained that the WCC activities and programs looked very much like a simple NGO agenda. In contrast, said the critics, the churches should be pointing out that the various crises in the world—poverty, terrorism, racism, climate change, and so on—are actually spiritual crises of humanity.

Harvesting the results from the Decade to Overcome Violence, taking the critiques seriously, and analyzing the changing world situation, the Busan assembly decided to launch the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace to build upon the insights gained and to take them to a deeper level, inviting Christians and "all people of good will" to join in that pilgrimage:

> Challenged by our experiences in Busan, we call all people – young and old, women and men, differently abled, people of

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[3] For the history of ecumenical involvement, see Fernando Enns, *The Peace Church and the Ecumenical Community*: *Ecclesiology and the Ethics of Nonviolence,* trans. Helmut Harder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007); Fernando Enns, *Ökumene und Frieden: Theologische Anstöße aus der Friedenskirche. Theologische Anstöße* Bd. 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2012).

[4] See Mathews George Chunakara, ed., *Building Peace on Earth. Report of the International Peace Convocation,* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013); Sara Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding: A Theological Analysis of the Just Peace Concept in the Textual Process towards an International Ecumenical Peace Declaration* (World Council of Churches 2008-2011 (Ph.D. diss., Lund University, 2016).

[5] See *Just Peace Companion*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012)

different faiths – to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions, together. We call first of all on the member churches and partners to walk together in a common quest, renewing our vocation of the church through collaborative engagement with the most important issues of justice and peace, healing a world filled with conflict, injustice and pain.[6]

Again, Mennonites—together with representatives from the other peace churches—had urged finding a way to continue the WCC's focus on peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. In the preparations for Busan, the idea of employing the pilgrimage metaphor gained traction. For peace church representatives, the prospect of including the spiritual dimension as well as deepening the theological grounding of their peace and justice activities sounded promising.

A year later, at the WCC's annual Central Committee meeting, the adoption of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace was developed further:

It is a transformative journey that God invites us to in anticipation of the final purpose for the world that the Triune God brings about. The movement of love which is essential to the Triune God manifests itself in the promise of justice and peace. They are signs of God's reign to come which is already visible here and now wherever reconciliation and healing are seen.[7]

Oikoumene in Context: Learning from the "Margins" in Colombia

One way in which the invitation to the PJP has taken concrete form is in reference to WCC's current "priority countries," such as Israel/Palestine, Korea, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Colombia. The realities and experiences in these contexts can provide guidance for the pilgrimage of the whole *oikoumene*. In addition, these contexts obviously need the global ecumenical fellowship to accompany

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[6] World Council of Churches, "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," WCC Central Committee (Document no. GEN 05 rev., 2014)**,** www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace, no. 1, accessed July 15, 2016.

[7] Ibid., 2.

them in solidarity and witness, and can therefore be described as "stations" of the pilgrimage. In 2016 most WCC activities focused on Israel/Palestine (and the interconnection with all the conflicts in the Middle East), and in 2017 Nigeria (since it was too dangerous to schedule international meetings in the DRC), exploring contexts of religion and violence.

For 2018 plans are to focus on Colombia and its 60-year armed conflict as well as the latest steps in political peace agreements. According to the most complete report of the National Center for Historic Memory (*Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*), it is estimated that from 1958 to 2012 the conflict killed at least 220,000 people.[8] Over the years the *campesino* communities have experienced discrimination and direct violence, as land control and land-dispossession are two of the most important factors fueling the conflict. Both legal and illegal interests have been at the core of acquiring properties and land-titles through unlawful means or by displacing hundreds of families in order to profit from the land's richness and wealth. In this process, more than 6,000,000 people have been displaced internally.[9]

Since late 2012, official dialogues have taken place between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Spanish acronym for Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces—People's Army), one of the largest and oldest guerrilla movements in the world. Yet, in light of the devastating numbers of victims and after decades of war, these dialogues have been accompanied by critical questions about the concepts of 'justice', 'peace', and 'reconciliation' within the Colombian context and its unique history. Today, one of the biggest fears—and a primary cause of polarization in Colombian society—is whether agreements signed by the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas in 2016 in Havana, Cuba will be imposed top-down, neglecting the experiences of the victims as well as ignoring the guilt of the perpetrators. Can the agreements instead be inspired as a real process of reconciliation from below? (The dialogues had very limited civil society representation.) What does an ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace add to such a context?

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[8] "Una guerra prolongada y degradada. Dimensiones y modalidades de violencia," ¡*Basta ya! Reporte General del Grupo de Memoria Histórica*, 2013, 31.

[9] Natalia Gómez Carvajal, "Las heridas mentales del desplazamiento forzado," *El Tiempo* (September 14, 2015), www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/victimas-del-desplazamiento-forzado-en-colombia/16372374, accessed July 15, 2016.

Confessing the Triune God on a Spiritual Journey of Peace and Justice

The spiritual dimension of the ecumenical PJP can be rooted in a Trinitarian framework of faith, and it unfolds in several dimensions representing traditional aspects of any pilgrimage: the *via positiva*, the *via negativa*, and the *via transformativa.* In the WCC's deliberations, the theological work of Dorothee Soelle has proved helpful for exploring in detail how these dimensions illuminate the new ecumenical journey of justice and peace.[10] Below we describe the three *vias*, link them to different ways of speaking of and confessing the One God within a Trinitarian framework, and show how the PJP is grounded in ecumenical theology. We then test this theology against the concrete experience of one rural community in Colombia.

Via positiva: Celebrating the Gifts of Creation

At the Busan assembly, a short but pointed theological document was adopted that represents some of the results of the former Decade. The "Statement on the Way of Just Peace" roots the concept of "Just Peace" in a Trinitarian approach. Every paragraph starts with a common statement of faith:

> *Together we believe in God, the Creator of all life.* Therefore we acknowledge that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. . . . In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in the fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity.[11]

The ecumenical community begins its PJP not as those who are seeking but as those who have been found. The pilgrimage starts with amazement at the goodness of creation, and an awareness that we all are part of the precious web of life. We recognize ourselves as being in relation with all of life, with our fellow creatures, with our "mother earth," long before we ourselves give

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[10] Cf. Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001).

[11] World Council of Churches, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace," WCC Assembly 2013 (Document no. PIC 02.4, 2013), www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace, no. 1, accessed July 15, 2016.

shape to any of these relationships—because of our faith in God the Creator of all. In addition, we are created in God's image, we are formed according to the community of love of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's story of life, God´s creation of humankind, does not begin with original sin but with original blessing. This amazement leads immediately to praising God and to celebration, a natural reaction to "God's great gift of life, the beauty of creation and the unity of a reconciled diversity."[12] This joy provides a vision of the possibility of a life in just relationships liberated from all violence— not only among humans but with all other creatures and with nature. In addition, this amazement about the miracle of life motivates us to seek to maintain these vital relationships by careful stewardship. The pilgrimage is a joyful journey filled with hope and trust, because we experience our lives in relation with all of life as the (original) blessing of God the Creator.

El Garzal is a rural community of 340 farmer families located in the municipality of Simití, along the Magdalena River in the South of Bolivar. It is the richness, beauty, and diversity of the natural environment that is the residents' point of pride. It is the land that connects the families to this particular place. The connection is expressed this way by one of the *campesinos* of the community:

> I was born and lived in a place that was by the river, and I have spent most of my life living next to the river. . . . And sometimes when I go out to the river, I am happy to see it, and I remember my childhood when the houses were there by the river. Many times, when I come close to the river, I feel a certain freshness; the running water seems to bring messages from other places, because the water goes through many zones of the country.[13]

These words capture something of the bond between the *campesinos* and the natural environment, in this case illustrated by the river. Most of the accompanying organizations that support the community of El Garzal look at the members "as an example of the struggle and hope for the just stewardship of land in Colombia."[14] It is this strong bond with the land that

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[12] WCC, "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," no. 3.

[13] Session on The Pilgrimage of Reconciliation with Andrés Pacheco, September 24, 2015, El Garzal, Colombia.

[14] "El Garzal: A Community of Hope," in *A Prophetic Call*: *Summary Report* (Bogotá: Justapaz

sustains them; it provides their identity, they are *campesinos* because of the land. The land is interpreted as a blessing of God. Despite all their struggles, this notion has made the community even more convinced of the gift of life. It is neither the injustice nor the suffering from violence that unites them and keeps them together, but the inspiration of being blessed by natural creation and by everything that shares in this blessing. This strong bond of awareness, the sense that "we belong here," creates solidarity among members of the community.

It is obvious how celebrating creation, glorifying the Creator God, resonates with the *campesinos.* In fact, they are able to teach that orientation to others. The *via positiva* dimension of the PJP is clearly rooted in their spirituality and identity. In terms of the pilgrimage, the question is whether it is, or could become, a spiritual source for peacebuilding and nonviolent resistance against injustice.

Via negativa: Liberation from Power and Violence
The Statement on the Way of Justice and Peace continues:

> *Together we believe in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.* Therefore we acknowledge that humankind is reconciled with God, by grace, and we strive to live reconciled with one another. The life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, point toward the peaceable kingdom of God. Despite persecution and suffering, Jesus remains steadfast in his way of humility and active non-violence, even unto death. His life of commitment to justice leads to the cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. By God's grace we too are enabled to take the way of the cross, be disciples and bear the costs.[15]

This Christological statement resonates well with traditional Mennonite peace theology. Here, in the ecumenical discernment, it is part of a larger Trinitarian framework. It is precisely the fact that the PJP begins

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Publicaciones, 2012), 8. See www.justapaz.org.
[15] WCC, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace," no. 1.

with an ontological starting point, not a chronological one—with being reconciled and not with condemning—that "makes the horror about the destruction of wonder so radical. . . . Mystical spirituality of creation will very likely move deeper and deeper into the dark night of being delivered into the hands of the principalities and powers that dominate us."[16]

Delegates representing the global ecumenical family within the WCC fellowship are have no illusions about the vast destruction of created life by violence and exploitation. For them it is clear that the pilgrimage "will lead us to the locations of ugly violence and injustices. We intend to look for God's incarnated presence in the midst of suffering, exclusion and discrimination."[17] The painful dimension of a pilgrimage is to seek the divine incarnation precisely in places apparently abandoned by God, where violence and injustice harm life or even destroy it. A pilgrimage of justice and of peace, if it is to become a path followed by the churches as disciples of Jesus in his suffering, cannot bypass the horrors and distress of the helpless, those on the margins. "Following Jesus means meeting him wherever people suffer injustice, violence, and war."[18] Only here, by actually encountering wounds and confronting our own powerlessness, our "relation to the basic realities of ownership, violence, and the self is changing."[19]

These direct encounters with violence may lead the Church to "repentance and – in a movement of purification – liberate us from obsession with power, possessions, ego, and violence, so that we become ever more Christ-like."[20] The WCC's *Just Peace Companion* indicates how "putting on the mind of Christ, being formed in Christ, involves spiritual practices and disciplines that embody peace in our own bodies."[21] Some of these practices are:

> • communal acts of worship in order to be nourished by God's
>   Word and by the Eucharist;
> • making prayers of intercession as part of our mindfulness of

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[16] Soelle, *The Silent Cry*, 92.
[17] WCC, "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," no. 3.
[18] Ibid, 2.
[19] Soelle, *The Silent Cry*, 92.
[20] WCC, "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," no. 3.
[21] WCC, *Just Peace Companion*, 51.

being formed in Christ;
• seeking and extending forgiveness, so as to create truthfulness in ourselves and to create the space for others who need to seek repentance;
• washing one another's feet, so as to learn the ways of service;
• engaging in times of fasting, to review our patterns of consumption and relationships to one another and to the earth;
• consistent and sustained acts of caring for others, especially those most in need of healing, liberation, and reconciliation;
• consistent and sustained acts of caring for the earth.[22]

In this way the pilgrimage can be described as involving a learning curve that requires us to "give up looking for justifications of what we have done and train ourselves in the practice of justice."[23] The pilgrimage will become credible only if it is a journey of repentance for those in power allowing the marginalized to take the lead. This may present the greatest challenge for the whole fellowship of churches, as it does for individual denominations like the Mennonites, on a *common* spiritual journey.

The El Garzal community is "currently engaged in a legal battle to defend their right to their land; a right that is threatened because Manuel Enrique Barreto, a large landowner has fraudulently acquired property titles to much of El Garzal."[24] This struggle has brought many threats to community leaders—to Salvador Alcántara in particular, pastor of the Foursquare Church—and to the community itself, constantly in danger of being displaced by armed groups (instrumentalized by the presumed land-owner) or of being dispossessed of their land by government institutions on false allegations by Barreto and his family. The community's bond with the land has been threatened by armed violence to the point that the Magdalena river has been turned into a symbol of death. The same *campesino* who described his personal connection with the river continues: "I also remember the times of violence, when violence was so strong, because those 'messages' also came through the river."[25] He is referring to the bodies of tortured and

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 5.
[24] Justapaz, "El Garzal: A Community of Hope," 8.
[25] Session on The Pilgrimage of Reconciliation with Andrés Pacheco, September 24, 2015, El

killed people sent down the river by the armed groups as a death threat against local residents.

Most of the people of El Garzal belong to one of the evangelical churches in the region, but that has not necessarily meant they could count on support from the denominational structures in their struggle. Different churches of the same denominations have labeled El Garzal´s resistance as "too political" or "disconnected from the ministry of the church." Indeed, it has been NGOs and some other actors, including other churches, who answered the call of the community for accompaniment. The Mennonite Church in Colombia, for example, represented by Justapaz[26] and Mencoldes,[27] and Christian Peacemaker Teams are among those who have been accompanying the community by concrete actions, such as making prayer requests, sharing liturgical resources, conducting visits, and participating in events, as well as taking urgent actions like maintaining a physical presence to protect community members, and conducting political advocacy at national and international levels.

This is an example of walking the *via negativa* dimension of the PJP with the people of El Garzal. It has meant "taking up the cross" for some. Accepting the *via negativa* dimension of a true discipleship supports taking a realistic view of cruel, unjust realities and mourning together in the presence of the crucified Christ. It reveals the need for the churches to acknowledge how their piety and their theologies might actually harm people and relations instead of assisting them. The concept of a pilgrimage allows the churches to learn about their own failures and to let go of power, control,

Garzal, Colombia.

[26] JUSTAPAZ: Asociación Cristiana Menonita para Justicia, Paz y Acción Noviolenta (*Mennonite-Christian Association for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action*) is a ministry of the Mennonite Church of Colombia that promotes nonviolence, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding in Colombia. JUSTAPAZ has accompanied the community of El Garzal in its struggle through pastoral/psychological care, emergency response, and political advocacy. See www.justapaz.org.

[27] MENCOLDES: Fundación Menonita Colombiana para el Desarrollo (*Mennonite Foundation for Development in Colombia*) is an initiative of the Mennonite Church and the Brethren Mennonite Church in Colombia that promotes integral (holistic) development in communities living in vulnerable and risky situations and that have suffered from human rights violations. MENCOLDES has also accompanied the community in psychosocial care, advocacy, and especially legal assistance and support. See www.fundacionmencoldes.org.

and dominating economic interests that sometimes drive their leaders and their denominations. It might also purify the churches in credibly testifying to the way of Jesus. For Mennonites, this is a reminder that peacemaking, especially when rooted in the second article of the Creed, is not so much part of a *theologia gloriae* but much more a part of a *theologia crucis*.

Via transformativa: Resist the Injustices

As a third article of faith, the fellowship of churches confess in the Statement on the Way of Justice and Peace that:

> *Together we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Giver and Sustainer of all life*. Therefore we acknowledge the sanctifying presence of God in all of life, strive to protect life and to heal broken lives.… We can state that: the Holy Spirit assures us that the Triune God will perfect and consummate all of creation at the end of time. In this we recognize justice and peace as both promise and present – hope for the future and a gift here and now.[28]

Pilgrims can become "healed healers." Only in becoming one with Christ does Dorothee Soelle see gaining strength to resist injustice and violence: "Salvation means that humans live in compassion and justice co-creatively; in being healed (saved) they experience also that they can heal (save)."[29] This is the third dimension of pilgrimage. In the pilgrims' (and thus in the churches') own self-transformation the courage and strength grows to resist evil, injustice, and violence. The PJP is much more than simply a new programmatic approach to action or advocacy strategies, all of which are meaningful and necessary. Its first aim is a life in God's Spirit, which causes transformation into a gentle relationship with creation and a "morality of enough" in order to resist immense economic and ecological injustices. This transformative spirituality is interpreted as a gift of the Holy Spirit that guides into all truth (John 16:13).

Even though El Garzal finds itself in the midst of a challenging legal struggle to obtain land-titles, members are helping others—an expression of how transformation and resistance can grow. Today, the community is

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[28] WCC, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace," no. 1.

[29] Soelle, *The Silent Cry*, 93.

inspiring and supporting various projects and people in the whole region. Their commitment is expressed this way by Pastor Salvador Alcántara:

> Defending human rights in Colombia is a way of life; it is a collective project that one must take hold of with body and soul in order to bring about change. Once you start there is no going back because once you take that first step you are no longer responsible just for yourself, but rather for the entire community.[30]

As result of reflecting on the metaphor of the pilgrimage, members of the community were able to reframe their struggle for justice as a spiritual journey of justice and peace. One *campesino* mentioned that undertaking the pilgrimage is "to walk in our community or wherever; we will encourage the people to walk in peace. And [to show] that in Colombia we have a peace process and that it is everybody's task."[31]

The notion of pilgrimage as "walking in peace" is also reflected in the way members see and even intercede for Barreto, the person behind the attempts to displace the community. One member reports that:

> Even though he (the pretended land owner) has tried to harm us, to kick us out from here … we have prayed many nights, done vigils and all that, and we have prayed: "Lord: have mercy on him; that he may acknowledge one day that what he is doing is not right." And even though I wished him to die, I do not feel that hatred against him or something similar any longer….[32]

Here, exploring a PJP serves as a great invitation to revisit traditional theological and spiritual notions, and to discover their relevance in shaping political and social realities, allowing oneself to be transformed by a journey of faith. Peace and justice cannot simply be seen as a result of a process or as a "problem to be solved." If experienced as a costly and transformative process of transformation, peace and justice must be understood as a spiritual journey of "walking in peace" in an eschatological horizon of the

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[30] Justapaz, "El Garzal: A Community of Hope," 8.
[31] Session on the "Pilgrimage of Reconciliation" with Andrés Pacheco, December 18, 2016, El Garzal, Colombia.
[32] Interview with Andrés Pacheco, September 25, 2015, El Garzal, Colombia.

great reconciliation in Christ, with God, the Creator, in order to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer of all life.

Conclusion

By initiating a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the ecumenical fellowship of churches allows itself to be reminded of its common beliefs—faith in the Triune God, as well as its common calling—to be ambassadors of justice and peace. Churches begin to understand that this calling is not to be lived out by representative specialized ministries or political advocacy with those in power. It is much more than that: it is a spiritual movement. And this movement, undertaken together as a global family of shared faith, provides opportunities as well as challenges. The call to worship and glorify God the Creator reminds the Church about its own worth—as individuals as well as communities—and how it is embedded in creation. The call to take up the cross and to walk the path of Jesus does not allow believers to stand on the sidelines as spectators, but makes them vulnerable to injustices and violence in order to unmask the limitations of the powers that be. The assurance that it is the Spirit of God within individuals and communities that will provide the strength to resist all evil, including the temptations within ecclesial institutions, is transforming this calling into a way of life in peace and justice.

For doing peace theology from a Mennonite perspective, the proposed Trinitarian framing of the PJP offers a twofold invitation. On the one hand, it invites people to enlarge an exclusively Christological understanding of peace-making (and justice) into a much wider theological framework. This perspective can help identify multiple ways in which God relates to creation in general and to humankind in particular. It does not allow for reducing peacebuilding to a simple ethical demand to follow Jesus, the "ethical model" for Christians, but embraces God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer and Reconciler, and the Holy Spirit the Sustainer of life as three complementary ways of God's peacebuilding with justice. On this basis, peace and justice are rooted in the heart of Christian faith and confession, and can no longer be reduced to a simple "ethical option" for the Church.

On the other hand, to frame peacebuilding as a pilgrimage also invites Mennonites to revisit peace and justice first of all as a spiritual attitude, not as a pragmatic or programmatic issue on the Church's agenda. The ecumenical

pilgrimage invites the historic peace churches to rediscover the centrality of peacebuilding to be primarily a spiritual gift and challenge. To welcome this pilgrimage raises new awareness of how to glorify God in worship, liturgy, "sacraments" (such as the Lord's Supper or footwashing), prayer, music, and the arts as expressions of a way of living peace and justice.

The application of this new ecumenical approach to local communities in a context of conflict—here, the El Garzal community—has shown that this approach resonates quite well with the experience of Christian faith challenged by violence and injustice. It is captured nicely by one of the *campesinos*: "[The pilgrimage] is my personal and spiritual journey while I am in this earth in order to know how I shall behave while I am here."[33] The pilgrimage in this journey of peace and justice invites the ecumenical family of churches to turn the traditional perspectives of "center/s" and "marginalized" upside down, without romanticizing poverty and displacement, or threatening violence. It could lead to a bold step, namely allowing the most vulnerable to take the lead, since God in his gracious and healing love has chosen to make them the center of God's presence and transformation. Listening to their experience of spiritual transformation may reveal that this way of peace and justice belongs to the very heart of the whole ecumenical family.

Fernando Enns is Professor of Peace Theology and Ethics at the Free University Amsterdam and Director of the Institute for Peace Church Theology at the University of Hamburg. Andrés Pacheco Lozano is a Ph.D. Researcher at the Free University Amsterdam and Student Assistant of the Amsterdam Center for Religion, Peace and Justice Studies (affiliated with the Mennonite Seminary of Amsterdam).

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[33] Session on the "Pilgrimage of Reconciliation" with Andrés, 18 December 2016, El Garzal, Colombia

What Constitutes a Mennonite Gospel of Peace? Progressives, Traditionalists, and the End of Mennonite Nonresistance in Prussia, 1848-1880

Mark Jantzen

On October 2, 1870, a month after the German military victory against the French at Sedan that would make the founding of the German Empire possible in January 1871, the Danzig Mennonite Church voted to allow "each brother to decide in which manner and to what degree he considers himself permitted in his conscience before God to follow the demands of the authorities" to serve in the military. The congregation agreed to recommend noncombatant service as the better option, but would equally accept members who became regular soldiers. This new approach was not, however, a change in any way to "our calling to present the love and the peace of the gospel of Jesus Christ through our Constitution and through every aspect of the life of our congregation." For this congregation it became possible to see Mennonite soldiers, noncombatant or regular service, as presenting the gospel of peace. The only reason given in the resolution for this change was that "it does appear very difficult . . . to prove from scripture the complete inadmissibility of the obligation to military service required of every citizen of the state."[1] By 1880, virtually all Mennonites in the Vistula Delta area had reached the same conclusion, the last group in Germany do to so, completing the shift toward the creation of Mennonite German soldiers.

The Danzig Mennonite church was the largest of three urban congregations in the Vistula River community. Its members were thus on average better educated and more integrated into German society than the majority in the rural areas. As such, this progressive congregation stood for better education for youth and for more engagement with society. Social engagement meant support for equal civil rights and for at least limited

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[1] H.G. Mannhardt, *The Danzig Mennonite Church: Its Origin and History from 1569-1919*, ed. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen, trans. Victor G. Doerksen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2007), 205.

democracy instead of rule only by the king. Along with education and engagement with society also came, as we see, a new attitude toward the Bible and a new way to present the gospel of peace in a Mennonite key.

Mennonite traditionalists questioned whether the Danzig church was still Mennonite and whether its members did not have a twisted sense of peace, since they could now kill Frenchmen either as a last recourse or with abandon as individual conscience allowed. Traditionalists openly advocated for civil inequality, since it meant that their young men would not have to serve in the military when the law otherwise declared all men equally liable for service. They disdained democracy if accepting it meant abandoning their view of living peacefully. When government pressure to conform and to serve grew too onerous, they emigrated to Russia or the United States, where staying outside the military was still an option.[2] An example of the traditionalists' understanding of the source and aim of sharing the gospel of peace with the world is included in one of their pleas to the Emperor to restore their exemption: "When our pilgrims' journey is ended and that which on earth is shrouded in darkness becomes bathed in light, then perhaps among the pillars supporting your royal throne will be found the prayers of our religious community."[3] The gospel of peace, in their view, was predicated on individuals deciding to support God's actions, not human action; and peace, which was generated by God's desire and not human desires, was finally achieved by spiritual means, including right living, not by human violence.

Mennonites in Prussia

Until German unification in 1871, individual sovereign states determined the legal parameters for Mennonite existence. From the mid-16th century until 1772, however, most German-speaking Mennonites lived under Polish rule. The Mennonite community in the Vistula Delta comprised some 13,000 people in the second half of the 19th century, a large majority of the Mennonites in German lands. As part of the Partitions of Poland, from 1772 to 1795 Mennonites transitioned from living in the Commonwealth

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[2] For a general overview of these two approaches to Mennonite identity and theology, see Mark Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion, and Family in the Prussian East, 1772-1880* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 161-228.
[3] Ibid., 221.

of Poland to the Kingdom of Prussia. Poland had only a tiny standing army, and Mennonites thus faced little pressure to serve in the military. Their challenges were freedom to worship; requirements to pay extra fees, taxes, and bribes; and facing periodic calls, never implemented in Poland, for their expulsion.[4]

Under Prussian rule starting in 1772, Mennonites received a new legal framework. Since Prussia had a large standing army and needed many soldiers, military service now became a much bigger issue. A Charter of Privileges issued in 1780 guaranteed Mennonites both freedom of worship and freedom from registering for military service, but it levied a new collective tax in exchange for legally tolerating their nonresistant stance. In 1789, under a new king, this policy was reviewed and changed. The Mennonite Edict issued that year took account of the fact that military registration was tied to farmsteads and households, so that if a Mennonite bought a farm from a Lutheran or Catholic, it had to be removed from the military rolls. To reduce such occurrences, Mennonites were for the most part permitted to buy real estate only from other Mennonites, effectively putting an economic cap on the size of the community and starting a large, long-standing stream of migration to Russia. In addition, the Edict mandated that boys born to marriages of Mennonites with non-Mennonites had to be enrolled as liable for military service. Since the Mennonite community did not allow members to be registered for service, the Edict effectively made so-called mixed marriages illegal. There were not a large number of such marriages in any case, but this absolute prohibition was a potent symbol of Mennonites' strenuous efforts to preserve faithful observance of the gospel of peace even if it meant accepting the imposition of greater distance from society.[5]

Revolutions in 1848

The year 1848 saw revolutions temporarily suspend royal rule in much of Europe. In the German Federation and Austria, the cowed rulers agreed

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[4] Peter J. Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009); Mark Jantzen, "Seeking out the Crevices in a Rigid Society," *Mennonite Life* 66 (2012), https://ml.bethelks.edu/issue/vol-66/article/part-iii-seeking-out-the-crevices-in-a-rigid-socie/, accessed August 1, 2016.

[5] Mark Jantzen, "From Poland to Prussia to Russia: Mennonite Emigration out of the Vistula Delta," *Preservings* 35 (2015): 52-60; Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers*, 15-77.

to hold elections for an all-German parliament, known as the Frankfurt National Assembly, which would write a constitution in order to unite all the states into one, thus pursuing goals of nationalism, equality, and democracy all at once. The revolutionaries were inspired by the ideals of the American and French Revolutions of the late 18th century.

When the Frankfurt National Assembly met, members first passed a set of Basic Rights to create a basis for the constitution and to inspire the masses to continue their support. The initial proposal abolished the nobility in order to create equality before the law for all, most controversially including Jews. Paragraph Thirteen read, "The enjoyment of civic and civil rights will neither depend nor be restricted on the basis of religion. Religion must not hinder the fulfillment of national duties." If adopted, this law would also mean the end of restrictions on Mennonites buying real estate and stop the payment of extra taxes imposed only on them. One Mennonite, Hermann von Beckerath, from the town of Krefeld in western Prussia, was a leading member of the parliament and was asked to serve as financial minister in the shadow national government the parliament set up. He was a vocal proponent of Jewish equality and favored Mennonite equality before the law as well.[6]

The principle of equality was applied to military service in Paragraph Six, "The obligation of military service is the same for everyone." Heinrich Wilhelm Martens, the representative from Danzig, knew this proposal would cause problems for Mennonites from his district. He explained to the Assembly the current Mennonite practice along the Vistula River of paying extra taxes to avoid military service, and advocated that the proposal be softened a bit to allow a future parliament to pass laws regulating exemptions. He warned the Assembly that for Mennonites this was a matter of freedom of religion and conscience, and to violate their conviction would make the new constitution less tolerant than the dreaded police state that members were trying to replace.[7]

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[6] Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers*, 137-51, quotation on 139. See also John D. Thiesen, "First Duty of the Citizen: Mennonite Identity and Military Exemption in Prussia, 1848-1877," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1998): 161-87; Ulrich Hettinger, *Hermann von Beckerath. Ein preußischer Patriot und rheinischer Liberaler* (Krefeld: Mennonitengemeinde Krefeld, 2010).

[7] Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers*, 141.

Many speakers protested his promotion of inequality in the Basic Rights that were intended to make at least all German males equal. One of the most powerful speeches against granting Mennonites unequal and exempt status came from von Beckerath. He noted that almost all Mennonites in his home congregation were willing to serve. Although he did not tell the Assembly, Krefeld had recently formed a civil guard militia unit largely drawn from property owners in support of the revolution and for self-protection against lower-class demands and riots. Mennonites provided 20 percent of the officers for this self-financed group. Von Beckerath called for imposing the draft on his follow Mennonites in the expectation that time and additional education would bring traditionalists out east around to the German majority viewpoint.[8]

The Assembly passed the Basic Rights as proposed, explicitly requiring Mennonites everywhere in Germany to serve in the military while also granting them full civil rights, including the right to buy property. However, in the time it took the Assembly to finish writing the constitution, monarchs in Austria and Prussia reasserted their authority and turned their armies against the revolutionaries everywhere in the German Federation. Monarchical rule returned, though tempered in Prussia by a new constitution that the king had his advisors write, and the decisions of the Assembly were not implemented. As the first all-German constitution, this application of modern liberal political thinking nonetheless came to define the expectations of broad segments of the educated German public.[9]

Progressives during German Unification

Prussia fought three wars in order to unify the roughly forty German states into a single nation-state, the German Empire—defeating Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866, and France in 1870. As a result of the new legal framework that included limited democracy in the form of an imperial parliament, the debate over Mennonite military service was revisited in much the same terms as 1848—and with the same outcome in the parliamentary vote. This time, however, the newly created law was actually implemented. In October 1867, the responsible parliament, a short-term North German Confederation Diet,

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[8] Ibid., 145-46.
[9] Ibid., 137-51.

passed a law making military service equal for all and explicitly mentioning Mennonites as required to serve. In March 1868, the King of Prussia, responding to visits and petitions by traditionalist Mennonite leaders, granted the option to serve in the military in noncombatant positions. Further clarification revealed Mennonite noncombatants would go through basic training with everyone else.[10]

The most influential progressive spokesperson was Wilhelm Mannhardt from Danzig, the first German Mennonite to earn a Ph.D. Trained in folklore, he worked as a tutor, sessional instructor, and independent scholar. He was well connected to Mennonite leadership circles, since his father, Jakob Mannhardt, had been pastor of the Danzig Mennonite Church since 1836. From December 1868 to January 1870, Mannhardt published a series of articles in the Mennonite newspaper his father had founded in 1854, *Mennonitische Blätter*, which laid out the case for serving in the military. As a moderate progressive, he advocated serving as a medic in the army, but he was willing to let individuals do as they saw fit. After the series was published, his congregation made the decision to see military service as a viable part of the gospel of peace.[11]

Mannhardt addressed the problems of biblical interpretation, noting how the Old and New Testaments seem both to find a place for warfare in the service of God and humanity and to prohibit it. He concluded that the time was not yet ripe for a complete absence of violence in human affairs, although that remained the goal of both God and the church. He argued that Menno's aim of a congregation without spot or wrinkle led Mennonites to separate themselves from society in a way that was neither realistic nor sustainable. The dogma of nonresistance created a false sense of separation, of us versus them, that denied a shared humanity. In contemporary terms, Mannhardt ruled out the possibility of a two-kingdom theology where God

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[10] *Allerhöchste Kabinetsordre vom 3. März 1868 betreffend die Wehrpflicht von Mennoniten und weitere Bestimmungen* (Elbing, 1879).

[11] The series of newspaper articles is reprinted in translation in Wilhelm Mannhardt, *The Military Service Exemption of the Mennonites of Provincial Prussia*, ed. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2013), 297-358. On Mannhardt himself, see Mark Jantzen, "Introduction," ibid., xxiii-xxx, and "Mannhardt, Wilhelm (1831-1880)," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mannhardt,_Wilhelm_(1831-1880)&oldid=120769, accessed August 1, 2016.

had one set of standards for believers and another for the state, which might be required to wage wars of self-defense. He examined a wide variety of case studies from history and philosophy that showed how working for justice and conflict resolution on occasion required violence as a last resort.[12] Karl Koop has noted how Mannhardt's argument highlighted the injustice inherent in Mennonites' social distancing. The unfair advantage their Charter of Privileges gave them over their neighbors made them "co-conspirators in a profoundly unjust situation."[13] Their lack of social engagement was cast as both a Christian and a social justice failing.

Mannhardt's use of martyr stories and Bible texts perhaps most clearly showed the shift in thinking. His account made no mention of any Anabaptist martyrs from the 16th century. Instead, he listed examples of those who died to rescue others, putting other people's lives ahead of their own. Prominent on the list was Arnold of Winkelried, a 14th-century soldier who sacrificed himself to win a battle and freedom for Switzerland. In addition to this being an odd choice of a martyr story for a Mennonite audience, it is not possible historically to establish if Winkelried even existed. But popularizing this story played an important role in developing 19th-century Swiss nationalism. Mannhardt went on to conclude that such examples of giving one's life for self-defense and defense of one's neighbors was the most rational route and best embodied Christ's words in John 15:13, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."[14] Certainly Mennonites serving as medics in the German army best fit this implicit command and these examples, but other forms of military service could fit as well, provided one served out of love of humanity, not hatred of the enemy. Mannhardt's argument for allowing the state to determine the moral boundaries around killing demonstrated that he accepted what one scholar calls an important aspect of German cultural Protestantism in the late 19th century that "reduced ethical activity to the nation, conceived as the means through which God revealed his will."[15]

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[12] Mannhardt, *The Military Service Exemption*, 297-358.

[13] Karl Koop, "A Complication for the Mennonite Peace Tradition: Wilhelm Mannhardt's Defense of Military Service," *The Conrad Grebel Review*, 34, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 42.

[14] Mannhardt, *The Military Service Exemption*, 305-307.

[15] Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 15. See also Martin Jung, *Der Protestantismus in*

In 1874, the Prussian Landstag, the parliament of the Kingdom of Prussia that was by far the largest of the German states comprising the Empire, passed a new Mennonite Law. Most civil restrictions on Mennonites were formally lifted, and Mennonite congregations were permitted to incorporate so that they could register as property owners and enjoy other legal rights. In order to do so, however, the law required that "their bylaws do not contain any provisions that are contrary to the general laws of the land."[16] The state counted Mennonites' Confessions of Faith as a part of their bylaws, so the old confessions that ruled out military service had to be rewritten. Two basic types of statements were developed, one asserting that war was an evil that resulted from sin, and the other, pioneered by the Danzig congregation, listing war as a terrible misfortune and reiterating the duty of every Christian to work for peace. By 1895, a unified Confession of Faith that followed the Danzig rationale called simply for members to avoid war insofar "as it depends on us."[17] This new vision, now enshrined as doctrine, conceptualized a Mennonite gospel of peace as something done at least partly with society, not as something specifically Mennonite carried out against social norms.

Traditionalists during German Unification
Traditionalists had long practice in tactics designed to maintain their understanding of the gospel of peace—refusing to kill under any circumstance while living godly lives dependent on God as an acknowledgment of the reality that Jesus is Lord—in the face of intense state pressure. From coming under the Prussian state in 1772 through the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century to the revolutions of 1848, the first step was always to petition king and government. Depending on the response and circumstance, Mennonites would then move to civil disobedience, suffering beatings and arrest rather than serve in the military, and to emigration as the next steps. A crucial problem now was that many Mennonites saw the issue as one for individuals to respond to, not one for the church to move on as a unified body, as the 1870 decision in Danzig made clear. Petitioning, civil disobedience,

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Deutschland von 1870 bis 1945 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 49-53.

[16] Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers*, 269.

[17] Ibid., 251.

and the threat of emigration had been effective in changing policy in the past, partly because virtually all Mennonites had acted collectively. The new swing to individualism broke both the power of Mennonite leadership to make decisions on behalf of the whole and the effectiveness of traditional modes of creating space in a hostile society for a Mennonite gospel of peace.

Thus, traditionalists following established patterns at first ignored the public debates and concentrated on influencing royal and governmental policy. From 1867 to 1873, numerous delegations went to Berlin to meet with the king, leading politicians, and cabinet members. This action resulted in a directive allowing noncombatant service. But participating in the military in any form was unacceptable to traditionalists. A large petition drive that collected around 1,800 male Mennonite signatures argued that liberal politicians targeted the Mennonites because they voted conservative. The proposed remedy was to restore Mennonites' exemption but strip them of some their civil rights, including the right to vote. An unequal society that respected their right to religious freedom but denied them other rights was preferred.[18] Their petitioning, and their known proclivity to emigrate, resulted in a ministerial regulation issued on November 28, 1868 that allowed them a couple of years of extra time before the draft was finally imposed.[19]

Since petitioning did not bring the full relief they wanted, traditionalists next turned to civil disobedience over military service, a tactic of long standing. They tried varying approaches this time. David van Riesen, who was to be drafted as a noncombatant medic in 1871, escaped the draft by arguing that since he had already renounced his citizenship and obtained a passport to leave, as a non-citizen he could not be inducted. It was just that his departure was delayed, perhaps indefinitely. The government decided against expulsion of this non-citizen, and instead closed the loophole by issuing exit visas revoking citizenship that were valid for only six months, after which citizenship was automatically restored. Nonetheless, this victory boosted the resolve of traditionalists. Johann Dyck was told to report for duty on April 22, 1872, but instead went into hiding. However, he was found that very day, arrested, and taken under military escort to Berlin. His uniform was forced onto him, but he refused to swear or affirm the oath

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[18] Ibid., 193-228.
[19] *Allerhöchste Kabinetsordre*, 4.

of induction. He was sentenced to several days in confinement, then asked again. He refused. Apparently this process repeated itself until September, when it seems his health was broken and he was given a medical release.[20]

Civil disobedience extended to using the ban and denying communion to Mennonite German soldiers. The staunchest proponent of nonresistance was Elder Gerhard Penner of the Heubuden congregation near Marienburg/ Malbork. He stood by the claim worked out during the Napoleonic Wars that a Mennonite who accepted military service by that choice chose to stop being Mennonite. As non-Mennonites, such people were of course no longer part of the congregation and, unless they repented and rejoined, they could not be served communion. Unfortunately for this position, Prussia in the 1870s was involved in the Kulturkampf controversy. Conservative Chancellor Otto von Bismarck needed liberal votes in parliament to pass his budget, and he secured them by instigating a struggle for German culture that targeted an ostensibly internationalist and traitorous Catholic church as a threat. Liberals feared the control of priests over supposedly simple-minded Catholics going to Marian pilgrimage sites in great number, cheering for Austria during the war against it, and generally promoting regressive ways of thinking. One of the laws passed made it illegal for a clergyman to withhold communion from a parishioner for obeying a law. The intent was to prevent priests from punishing Catholics who helped or sided with the state in this controversy.[21]

On June 7, 1874, Elder Penner publicly denied Bernhard Fieguth communion for being a soldier. This act brought the elder into court. At the end of an appeals process, the High Court in Berlin found him guilty and sentenced him to small monetary fine or a week's imprisonment. Penner emigrated in 1876 to Beatrice, Nebraska. Concluding that there were now no Mennonites left in Prussia, only former Mennonites who were willing to become or already were soldiers, he took along a communion set designed to serve over 1,000 members at one setting. It is now part of the permanent display at Kauffman Museum on the campus of Bethel College in North

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[20] Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers*, 220-23.
[21] David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993); Ronald Ross, *The Failure of Bismarck's Kulturkampf: Catholicism and State Power in Imperial Germany, 1871-1887* (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1998).

Newton, Kansas. Since there were no legal options for Mennonites to avoid military service, all the traditionalists, roughly 16 percent of the community, emigrated to the United States or Russia.[22]

Traditionalists failed not only in their regular patterns of response to government pressure to go to war, but also in understanding or working within the new individualistic context. As the struggle over a Mennonite gospel of peace moved to individual decision-making, it was difficult for traditionalists to counter the intellectual arguments of Wilhelm Mannhardt and educated urban Mennonite pastors who advocated military service. Traditionalist leaders were willing to deal with state officials and even go to audiences with the king and emperor, but they did not have much education beyond primary school. Already in 1850, in response to lapses in the Mennonite peace witness in the face of the 1848 revolutions, Elder Peter Froese of the Orlofferfelde congregation had published a booklet outlining the case for nonresistance. He saw the rise of a conception of humans as primarily focused on getting their rights as a cause of violence, not a solution to violence. The love of enemy was a command of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. Who could set it aside? The problem was that a natural person, as opposed to a spiritual person, "cannot reconcile such an idea with his reason, he judges all by natural standards and sees only the physical nature. According to natural reason it would be the biggest folly not to defend one's right, one's possessions, one's worldly goods."[23]

In the 1870s, one of the few traditionalists writing on the subject was Wilhelm Ewert, Elder of the Obernessau congregation near Thorn/Toruń. He was the Prussian delegate who travelled with Mennonites from Russia in 1873 looking for immigration opportunities in North America. For him, a nationalistic definition of neighbor could never be a Christian definition. On the meaning of John 15:13, he noted that the French were still "our brothers . . . saved with the precious blood of Christ."[24] Ewert went on to enumerate

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[22] Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers*, 223-28.

[23] Peter Froese, *Liebreiche Erinnerung an die mennonitische Glaubens-Genossen in Hinsicht des Glaubens-Artikels von der Wehrlosigkeit* (Tiegerweide, 1850), 9-12, quote on 11-12.

[24] Wilhelm Ewert, "Erwiderung auf den Aufsatz in Nr 6, 7, 8, 9 der Mennonitische Blaetter, Jahrgang 1872, 'Koennen und duerfen wir Mennoniten der vom Staate geforderten Wehrpflicht genuegen.'" See the abridged version, "A Defense of the Ancient Mennonite Principle of Non-Resistance by a Leading Prussian Mennonite Elder in 1873," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11,

the ways in which progressives' flirtation with and adaption of many norms from society had led them to prefer military service to emigration. Jakob Mannhardt, for example, had been awarded a Prussian medal, the Order of the Red Eagle (fourth class, with the number fifty), for his fifty years as a Mennonite pastor and his assistance in getting Mennonites to serve in the military. Others relished their new civil rights and equality before the law, especially since they could now buy additional farmland. Some leaders were interested in the benefits of congregational incorporation. The final straw for Ewert was the new Mennonite interest in "the glory of the fatherland and the nation." Traditionalists found themselves powerless to prevent these manifestations of modernity from winning the hearts and minds of their co-religionists.

Conclusion

This case study of Prussian Mennonite acceptance of military service as an authentically Mennonite mode of the gospel of peace raises questions about the foundations of contemporary Mennonite peacebuilding. These questions revolve around contemporary peace workers' understanding of their role, their place in society and their relationship to modernity, the locus of collective discernment, and the epistemological lenses examined, used, and discarded.

　　In this case, traditionalists argued for a certain distance from society, in that a Mennonite application of the gospel of peace could never involve or support military violence, a stance that historically is more accurately called "a peace witness," since it witnesses to God's actions and to personal conversion and ethics as the source of peace, not human force. Given the strenuous efforts involved in funding extra taxes, maintaining community economic life in the face of clear discrimination, engaging hostile government officials and angry neighbors, and finally emigrating when necessary, traditionalists could never understand the progressives' slur that they were too passive and inactive. Traditionalist social distancing, however, makes it hard to see how they were building anything—peace or otherwise—with and for society. Outsiders and even their own progressives could see them only as dangerous, ignorant, or obnoxious freeloaders.

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no. 4 (October 1937): 284-90, quotes from 287 and 290.

Progressives therefore countered with a social engagement that saw military intervention as a necessary function that, if done with restraint and humility, could be a valid expression of a Mennonite gospel of peace, since it was judged to have more potential than traditionalist approaches for enhancing social justice. Accepting society's definition of peace as human actions that will inevitably, if regrettably, require violence had the advantage of eliminating forever the charge of freeloading that so haunts Mennonite existence in societies based on equal rights and duties. If the violence could be minimal enough and the gain in rights and justice great enough, this was an overall gain that progressives viewed as meeting God's expectations better than traditionalists' tired claims to be following the example of Jesus in their personal lives.

Behind the question of when violence is justified lurks the larger one of Mennonites' relationship to modernity. Karl Koop's analysis of Mannhardt's arguments shows how Mannhardt borrowed the modern privileging of the individual as the site of moral decision making. Self-preservation as the highest moral duty is the wedge he used to drive Mennonites to participate in preservation of the group via military self-defense. The group was now defined by the "democratic principle" and not by ecclesiology.[25] The nation or the society had replaced the congregation as the arbiter of what constituted the gospel of peace. The protests lodged by Froese and Ewert were perhaps arguing that modernity and the language of equal rights shifted the boundaries of Mennonite individual and collective identity, and of Mennonite understandings of peace, in ways that progressives have under-analyzed or ignored.

Both sides still had visions for Mennonite efforts on behalf of peace, but from quite different social locations with different aims and practices. This raises another question: What remains "Mennonite" about peace efforts from these two different stances of seeing peace as something humans achieve with God or on their own, or as withdrawal from or integration with society? Historian Tom Brady recently asked this question about Mennonite contributions to European history.[26] On the traditionalist side that prides itself

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[25] Koop, "Complication for the Mennonite Peace Tradition," 41-44, quote on 44.

[26] Tom Brady, "The Cost of Contexts: Anabaptist/Mennonite History and the Early Modern European Past," *European Mennonites and the Challenge of Modernity over Five Centuries:*

on its distance from society, the contributions to history and peace appear recognizably Mennonite—but miniscule. If Mennonites are so different from and disengaged from society, how could they contribute? On the other hand, if they are well integrated into society and are free as individuals to become activists or to remain indifferent in various arenas, including peacebuilding, what about their contributions remains "Mennonite"?

One answer suggests that Mennonites had their own unique, Bible-based way of engaging and accepting modernity, but numerous case studies show how difficult and how rarely successful that approach was.[27] Brady suggests that such progressives might contribute as individual businesspeople, farmers, or even soldiers, but not really or clearly as Mennonites. Examining Mennonites' location in society raises a further question of whether there is such a thing as peacebuilding that is "Mennonite" in a collective or ecclesiastical sense. Is it simply a few individual Mennonites and some Mennonite institutions doing peace work with the same approach as other practitioners, just as progressive Mennonites' business, educational, or farming practices might not differ greatly from those of others?

A final set of questions concerns the epistemological foundations of current Mennonite peacebuilding. Traditionalist epistemology for a gospel of peace in Prussia was narrow in scope, while progressives added new sources of knowledge and authority borrowed from the society at large. One constant is that both sides appealed to biblical texts, but they did so in different ways. Koop has found Mannhardt's approach to be less Christocentric than that of traditionalists, and dismissive of the new birth and discipleship so central to Menno Simons and other Anabaptists. Mannhardt's analysis seemed more Lutheran.[28] Does the common practice of referring to the Bible suggest that Mennonite peace workers even today should cite the Bible in justifying their work? And if it does, must such reference be done only in certain ways or with certain lenses? Mannhardt and other progressives appealed to the best academic and scientific research of the day as part of their acculturation

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Contributors, Detractors, and Adapters, ed. Mark Jantzen, Mary S. Sprunger, and John D. Thiesen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2016), 1-23.

[27] The suggestion of a unique synthesis is outlined in Mark Jantzen and Mary S. Sprunger, "Introduction" in ibid., xvii-xxx. Eighteen case studies follow in the same volume.

[28] Koop, "Complication for the Mennonite Peace Tradition," 44.

to society, while traditionalists rejected such findings as becoming more important than the Bible.

Today, we might ask, on what combination of epistemologies is Mennonite peacebuilding finally built? How do sociological, biblical, theological, communal, scientific, and experiential understandings of truth shape and guide Mennonite peacebuilders? Since modernity has changed and expanded what constitutes authoritative sources of truth, we finally must ask, In what ways do modernity and modern understandings of the world and human beings aid—or detract from—peace work and a gospel of peace that is recognizably Mennonite?

Mark Jantzen is Professor of History at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, and Chair of the Department of History and Conflict Studies.

Making Peace with Suicide:
Reflections on Miriam Toews's *All My Puny Sorrows*

Grace Kehler

> I remembered something I'd read, after my father's suicide, in Al Alvarez's book *The Savage God*. It had to do with some of the writers and artists who lived, and killed themselves, under Russia's totalitarian regime: 'And, as we bow in homage to their gifts and to their bright memory, we should bow compassionately before their suffering.'[1]

To bring, make, or build peace requires a thoroughgoing engagement with violence, both in its manifest and more subtle forms. Genuine pacifism, as enacted by Christ and embraced by various followers, including a majority of the Anabaptist ancestors of the Mennonites, entails not a simple retreat from violence but an identification and address of it. The Anabaptists of the 16th century took a stand against the systemic coercions of state and church, the former assuming the right to kill as well as to compel citizens to bear arms on its behalf, and the latter arrogating to a select clerisy the right and obligation to define ethical, spiritual living. In declaring themselves nonviolent and committed to a communal, consensual practice of everyday spiritual care by the priesthood of all believers, Anabaptists bore dual witness to the possibility of an alternative life and to the violations of body and spirit that were occurring *within* Christianity. If the inconsistencies and outright failures that have troubled and continue to trouble an Anabaptist peace practice are many, arguably these all-too-human and communal pacifistic lapses have also galvanized contemporary Mennonites into making bold queries regarding the social locations of violence—including intra-communal violence—and the components of a nonviolent practice that fosters loving relationships in the quotidian.[2]

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[1] Miriam Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 91.

[2] I discuss intra-communal Mennonite violence and the work of writers in calling community

Nowhere is such inquiry more in evidence than in contemporary Mennonite writing in North America.[3] Miriam Toews—whose *All My Puny Sorrows* I reflect on in this piece—avers in a recent *Granta* essay that the topic of pacifism itself has been "dangerous" within the Mennonite communities of which she has knowledge. She commends Rudy Wiebe's "groundbreaking" and "revolutionary" first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), as a text that stirred controversy because it spoke "honestly and philosophically about the conflicts that arise from non-conflict" in a purportedly pacifist community.[4] As she notes in the article, Wiebe has afforded her a similar compliment during their joint book tour in Germany. Rebutting an audience member's characterization of *A Complicated Kindness* as a "filthy" book that defamed Menno Simons, Wiebe instead lauded its "honest" appeal for change: it was, he attested, "asking us [Mennonites] to be self-critical, to accept reality, and to love better."[5]

Toews, who identifies as a secular Mennonite and who exuberantly pillories narrow Mennonite moralism, does not share Wiebe's explicit concern with the rehabilitation of Mennonite religious practices. She does, nonetheless, participate in a recognizable strategy within writing by Anabaptist descendants, that of calling community members to account for their acts of coercion, especially the shaming or silencing of those whose behaviors or beliefs deviate from those of the collective.[6] Instead of

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to account in Grace Kehler, "Heeding the Wounded Storyteller: Toews' *A Complicated Kindness,*" *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 34 (2016): 37-59, and Grace Kehler, "Representations of Melancholic Martyrdom in Canadian Mennonite Literature," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 29 (2011): 153-71.

[3] See, for example, the following writers on vigilant self-questioning as fundamental to naming and addressing violence: Harry Loewen, "The Mennonite Writer as Witness and Critic," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 2 (1984): 113-23; Magdalene Redekop, "Escape from the Bloody Theatre: The Making of Mennonite Stories," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 11 (1993): 9-22; Rudy Wiebe, "The Artist as a Critic and a Witness," *A Voice in the Land: Essays by and about Rudy Wiebe*, ed. W.J. Keith (Edmonton: NeWest, 1981), 39-47; Di Brandt, *So this is the world & here i am in it* (Edmonton: NeWest, 2007), especially 105-32; Jesse Nathan, "Question, Answer," in *After Identity: Mennonite Writing in North America*, ed. Robert Zacharias (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2015), 175-93.

[4] Miriam Toews, "Peace Shall Destroy Many," *Granta*, no. 137, November 23, 2016, granta. com.

[5] Ibid.

[6] See footnotes 2 and 3.

countering the hegemonic with compassionate and consensually negotiated practices, Mennonites resort at times to rigid, formulaic definitions of right conduct, turning non-conformist practice into an instrument of violent imposition of conformity within community. Equally galled by the moral stigmatization of the persistent questioner and of the mentally ill—a recurrent topic in Toews—she, like Wiebe, indicates that a caring peace witness exists only insofar as it remains self-critically alive to the suasions of power, notably to the alacrity with which a desire for the good converts into a tyrannous impulse for a highly particular instantiation of this good. Pacifism, both writers imply, must take form as an advent, as an ongoing practice of uncovering collective and individual complicity with violence and of learning to "love better" in a manner that places the other before the self.[7] That peace-making, that learning to love, necessarily extends to the person who despairs of life, as Toews repeatedly demonstrates.

In her autobiographically informed Manitoba trilogy—*Swing Low* (2000), *A Complicated Kindness* (2004), and *All My Puny Sorrows* (2014)—Toews places in apposition the Mennonite church with the medical establishment in regard to their damaging treatment of profoundly depressed individuals.[8] Both institutions pride themselves on refraining from harm, yet their creeds do not translate into lived, compassionate relations. Rather, church figures and medical authorities (often middle-aged men) disparage her agonized, ultimately suicidal family members, reducing them to incomprehensible figures whose words and actions have no truth to tell but that of madness itself: the spiritual madness of sinners who reject grace or the medical madness of the morbid who refuse or do not respond to therapy.[9] In *All My Puny Sorrows*, Yolandi (Yoli) Von Riesen, the narrator who bears more than a passing resemblance to Toews, depicts church authorities as bullies who "put the fist in pacifist." These are "men . . . with tight collars and bulging necks" who "go around terrorizing people and making them

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[7] On nonviolent love as "a commitment to the advent and nurturing of difference," see Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2001), 20.

[8] Miriam Toews, *Swing Low: A Life* (Toronto: Vintage, 2005); Miriam Toews, *A Complicated Kindness* (Toronto: Vintage, 2004); Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*.

[9] Toews frequently draws on hyperbole and caricature to call attention to the extreme psychic damage authority figures inflict on the vulnerable. See Kehler, "Heeding the Wounded Storyteller," 44-45.

feel small and shitty and then call them *evil* when they destroy themselves."[10] Correspondingly, psychiatric professionals use shaming tactics against those who find life unbearable, imputing to them a lack of "decency" and integrity.[11] The primary figure against whom the ire of church and medicine is directed in this novel is Yoli's elder sister Elfrieda (Elf), who attempts suicide several times before dying. Perceived alternately as willful or weak-willed, Elf causes affront because she cannot desire her life, a fundamental good of Western (Christian) society and medicine, and, in the perverse logic of authority figures, comes to symbolize the antithesis of goodness: a figure of evil or indecency who must be sanctioned or re-educated into conformist behavior.

Toews consistently pushes back against such stigmatization in her texts, in part by bearing witness to the complex subjectivities of her lost loved ones and, thus, by placing their substantial lives back into circulation with their traumatic deaths. Of equal import, she calls on professionals and community members alike to reconceive of the psychosomatically afflicted as exemplars of pained, not botched, humanity. The citation from Goethe she offers in *All My Puny Sorrows* epitomizes her radical vision: "suicide is an event of human nature, which, whatever may be said and done with respect to it, demands the sympathy of every [hu]man, and in every epoch must be discussed anew."[12] Whereas hegemonic culture tends to position suicidal persons as individual problems to be managed, Toews (via Goethe) shifts the emphasis to the responsiveness and the responsibility of witnesses.[13] Suicide, "an event of *human* nature," tasks those who do not find life unbearable to enact an ethical subjectivity that extends care to those whose suffering remains "incomprehensible."[14] Precisely because we cannot recognize ourselves in their actions or desires, we must vigilantly guard against an impulse to oppress otherness. What's at issue is an affirmation of the humanity not only of the sufferers but of the witnesses. As affect theorist Kelly Oliver points

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[10] Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*, 34, 181.

[11] Ibid., 38.

[12] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*, 278.

[13] For in-depth discussions of ethical subjectivity as based on address and response, see Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), and Oliver, *Witnessing*.

[14] In the quotation from *All My Puny Sorrows*, the emphasis is mine. The injunction to bear witness to the "incomprehensible" comes from Oliver, *Witnessing*, 106.

out, our desires for the familiar and our fear of the unlike frequently lead to domination or exclusion, relations that deform the acting subjects as surely as those they subordinate. She elaborates: "If we . . . conceive of identity as opposed to difference, and we conceive of anything or anyone outside of the boundaries of [our desires] as different, then we will conceive of anything or anyone outside of ourselves as a threat to our own identity. Identity will be pitted against difference. Relations will be hostile. Hostile relations will lead to hostile actions, and the result will be war, domination, and torture."[15]

As in the earlier Manitoba texts, Toews's *All My Puny Sorrows* connects the antagonisms and micro-aggressions towards death-driven individuals with larger social structures of violence. Yet, discerningly, this most recent work also poses meta-reflexive questions about the conflicts and affective divisions within intensely *loving* familial relationships when a member craves release from life. Toews fictionalizes her profound connection with her sister Marjorie through the characters of Yoli and Elf, who, like the historical sisters, share the trauma of their father's "acres of existential sadness" and his eventual suicide,[16] but who find themselves in the impossibly paradoxical position of sister "enemies who love each another" when it comes to Elf's/ Marj's suicide attempts.[17] What does it mean to refrain from harm, or to enact a nonviolent love, when one family member desires to die and the other wishes her to live? How does one even begin to assess where violence resides when a person begs to be at peace from inner tortures and wishes to be accompanied to Switzerland where assisted suicide is legal, and the other feels that she in turn is being killed by her sister's need to die? When they are loving sister-enemies, who is killing whom? When does care itself take on aspects of the oppressive?

What I have come to admire about Toews is her abiding attention to the incoherences of ourselves as we grapple with the fact that we don't know how to care for, and dwell with, those whose desires are inexplicable to us. Especially when we love them, we want them to identify with our version of the good, and, if they become seriously ill or vulnerable, to accept that we can choose the good for them. We prod them to resist death with all

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[15] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 2-3.
[16] Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*,162.
[17] Ibid., 37-38.

their might, engaging in ordinary activities like eating dinner with family and sharing wine instead of starving themselves, as Elf does in one attempt to escape embodiment, or drinking bleach, as she does in another. We want them to bind wounds, not self-inflict them. We beg them to take a regimen of drugs in titrated doses as a means of survival, not downing them in a search for oblivion (Elf's second attempt). We want a narrative arc that affirms livability, even if it explores the abyss of psychosomatic pain. We want things to make sense. Toews wants things to make sense. But she models the urgency of witnessing what is beyond rational recognition, of getting beyond a calculated assessment of what constitutes a good life and what counts as livable versus unlivable pain.[18] This is a terrifying going-beyond-the-self to linger with another's melancholia or desperation that may not admit of a cure. As Toews illustrates, the witness must endure the multiplied agonies of accepting the beloved other as constitutive of the self (and, hence, of one's identity) *and* as unassimilable in her difference.

   All My Puny Sorrows immediately signals its agonistic interrelational aesthetic in its title. Elf, in her teenage years, takes the acronym "AMPS" as her signature for her graffiti art in the town of East Village—the fictional analogue for Steinbach, Manitoba. The phrase derives from a Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem that commemorates his elder sister Ann, a poem Yoli discovers years later during one of Elf's psychiatric hospitalizations. In "To a Friend, Together With an Unfinished Poem," Coleridge laments,

> I too a SISTER had, an only Sister –
> She lov'd me dearly, and I doted on her!
> To her I pour'd forth all my puny sorrows
> (As a sick Patient in a Nurse's arms,)
> And of the heart those hidden maladies
> That shrink asham'd from even Friendship's eye.
> O! I have woke at midnight, and have wept
> Because SHE WAS NOT! . . .[19]

   Elf's chosen melancholic forerunner of the British Romantic era, Coleridge wrote exquisitely about his not so puny devastations—including

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[18] The concept of witnessing beyond recognition derives from Oliver, *Witnessing*, 8-16.
[19] Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*, 237.

psychic and somatic illnesses, creative and interpersonal struggles of communication, lost ideals, and the deaths of kin—forging a poetics from his personal experiences of pain. Elf, who becomes a world-class pianist after her stint as a town graffiti artist, similarly communicates from within a position of woundedness. Yet the particular poem cited by Toews pre-empts any one-to-one correspondence between Elf and Coleridge. The "I" and the "my" prove flexible rather than precise referents, allowing for changes in the sisters' relations as well as for simultaneity. If Elf, six years older than Yoli, nurtures her sibling by providing the means to query the narrow morality of their town during their girlhood, in adulthood both sisters function as nurse and patient (to borrow Coleridge's terms), ministering compassion to one another and asking for care of the heart's individual maladies. "AMPS" functions as a double signature in the novel, as Toews reworks the Coleridgean poetic that prioritizes a singular perspective on pain and uses "AMPS" to indicate a practice of mutual responsiveness.[20] The nurse may become the patient and vice versa. More radically still, the patient might attend to the caregiver's hurts (much like the wounded artist who continues to generate imaginative visions of the world), erasing absolute distinctions between supplicants and alleviators.

At the same time, "AMPS" registers a crisis within the intimacy of the sisters, referencing the sorrows that divide them and the limits of mutuality. Toews is at her most profound in depicting the sisters as wracked with co-implicated yet excruciatingly individual pains, each appealing to the other to attend to her wounded state. Yoli needs Elf to remain a central, sustaining presence in her life, a nurse for and in the everyday, while Elf needs a sister-nurse to affirm that ending her pain comprises a human event worthy of care.[21] When still frantic to keep Elf alive, Yoli feels possessed by acute fear, grief, and rage that she attempts to channel into protective, life-saving measures. Yet so intense is her attachment to her sister that she inadvertently

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[20] See in particular one of the exchanges between the sisters that results in mutual consolation. Elf, again in the hospital, puts "her arms up like a baby waking up from nap time and wanting to be held," and Yoli falls into those arms and bawls. Ibid., 246. I thank Olivia Polk for drawing my attention to this example.

[21] Toews provides an example of a nurse who facilitates a wanted death. Lottie, the sisters' mother who trained as a nurse, decides to let her father "go" after he has endured nine long years of hospitalization. Ibid., 245. See page 161 for one of the sisters' arguments about "need."

resorts to emotional "tortur[e]": she accuses Elf of a narcissistic inability to comprehend either the goodness of her life or the suffering she inflicts on her family, who feel as if they are dying along with Elf.[22] Indeed, like the very institutions Yoli deplores, she finds herself quantifying suffering—Elf's should be more livable than her own, given Elf's successes—and advocating conformist narratives of the decent and the good, narratives in which the patient enters into life-sustaining practices through an exertion of reason and will—or becomes the enemy. She interrogates Elf: "How do you think Nic [your husband] feels? . . . Does it make you happy to think of Nic or mom finding your dead body?"[23] In her all-consuming desire for her sister to desire what she and other family members desire, Yoli realizes that her love has become a form of aggression, a vehement imposition of her needs onto Elf.

That Yoli continues to struggle with an impulse to aggression after Elf's death attests to the extraordinary difficulty of making peace with suicide. If, like Coleridge, she finds herself awake and lamenting her sister at and long after midnight, her mourning, at least in its early stages, harbors an ongoing grievance with the sibling-enemy she loves. Making nightly harassing calls to the hospital that discharged Elf on the day she ended her life—attempting to "haunt the hospital," in her mother's apt words—Yoli arguably wants most of all to harangue and haunt Elf.[24] Yoli overtly blames the medical community (and the Mennonites) for their inadequate care of the wounded. Still, her rage-filled grief suggests equally that she grapples to come to terms with Elf's desires to be released from the hospital and from an agonized existence. The ghost, a figure of unfinished business, makes claims on the living through haunting.[25] Yoli, who is not done arguing with her sister, seeks to make claims on, and to haunt, the dead with her accumulating, unredressed sorrows. Yet this antagonistic form of sorrowing that implicitly calls for recognizing her own subjectivity also does violence to Yoli, who ultimately feels compelled to undertake the bewildering labor

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[22] Ibid., 148, 162.

[23] Ibid., 148.

[24] Ibid., 313.

[25] On ghosts that call attention to the unfinished hurts of history, see Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997). Toews, by contrast, suggests that the living Yoli's haunting might perpetuate violence.

of bearing witness beyond rational recognition. Her responsibility is not, as she imagined, "the finite task of comprehending" another (as Kelly Oliver writes in another context), but rather "the infinite task" of opening herself up to loving connections in spite of losses that strike at the core of her identity.[26]

To learn to love the other ethically and nonviolently, first in her desperation and then in her absence, requires the witness to perform the nearly impossible. Such love involves "bow[ing] down before" the sufferer "with compassion" precisely in her difference from the self;[27] it involves getting beyond blame, unresolvable arguments, or a demand for reciprocity. An especially striking example of such peacemaking occurs at the end of novel where Yoli imagines a feat that neither she nor the historical Toews could bear to undertake: accompanying the suicidal sister to a permitted, planned death in Switzerland. No mere compensatory fantasy, this vision suggests that an ethical relationship of address and response is not confined to the realm of the living, and that the affective touches of the dead may prove as transformative as those from the physically present community. Yoli, in the aftermath of the traumatic and traumatizing death of her sister, strives to respond to Elf's pleas to be seen as fully human and to envision anew a caring, nonjudgmental practice of witness to suicide. Yoli did not want her sister to die. Toews did not want her sister to die. But character and autobiographical author alike resolutely work to rid themselves of the enmity that deforms love.

In a 2014 interview, Toews discusses her continuing address of the relationship between the suicide and the survivor: "There's this great line by Václav Havel," she says. "I just read it recently— otherwise I probably would have tried to find a place to throw it in [the novel]. 'Sometimes I wonder if suicides aren't in fact sad guardians of the meaning of life.' I just love it. I don't know exactly what it means or what I even think it means, but I think about it a lot. . . . I don't know. It's open-ended."[28] Taking my prompts from *All My Puny Sorrows*, I propose that the suicide guards the meaning of life

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[26] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 90.

[27] Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*, 246. See also 91.

[28] Mark Medley, "Complicated kindness: Miriam Toews grapples with the sister who asked her to help end her life," *National Post*, April 11, 2014, news.nationalpost.com/arts/books/complicated-kindness-miriam-toews-grapples-with-the-sister-who-asked-her-to-help-end-her-life, accessed May 26, 2016.

by reintroducing the living to the "great mysteries" of "earth's sorrows and joys" that simultaneously bind and divide us.[29] The suicide reminds us of the urgency of learning to dwell with those whose feelings we may neither comprehend nor alleviate, lest we turn tyrannical in our demands for what passes as reasonable or acceptable. If in our mourning we turn towards rather than away from those we have lost to non-accidental death, we may find ourselves confronted with the coercive predilections within the self and confounded by the questions of good and evil. Divested of our certainties, our grief might be mingled with gratitude for our spirit's continued growth under the tutelage of the dead. "Violence," Toews asserts, "is eternal."[30] So, too, must peace-making be.

Grace Kehler is Associate Professor of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

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[29] I have excerpted phrases from Rainer Maria Rilke's "Duino Elegies: The First Elegy," *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage, 1989), 155.

    In the end, those who were carried off early no longer need us:
    they are weaned from earth's sorrows and joys, as gently as children
    outgrow the soft breasts of their mothers. But we, who do need
    such great mysteries, we for whom grief is so often
    the source of our spirit's growth—: could we exist without *them*?

[30] Toews, *All My Puny Sorrows*, 251.

Nurturing Peacebuilders for the Future: International Service Learning in One Mennonite High School

Geraldine Balzer

"Sin el pan, no hay ninguna justicia; sin la justicia, no hay ninguna paz."
(Without bread, there is no justice; without justice, there is no peace.)
— *Juan Pablo Morales, Guatemala (2011)*[1]

For close to two decades, Rosthern Junior College (RJC), a Mennonite high school serving Saskatchewan and Alberta, has created opportunities for students to understand the connections between justice, peace, and Anabaptist theology. Each academic year, all students participate in ALSO (Alternative Learning and Service Opportunities) locally, nationally, and internationally. Since 2007, I have been a researcher-participant with groups that have travelled to Central America, collecting data for a longitudinal study on the perceived impact of this experience on student participants. Their experiences in rural Indigenous communities in Guatemala and El Salvador have given them insights into the impact of colonialism, the effects of neoliberalism and globalization, and the marginalization of the Mayan people, especially women and children. Exposure to these issues, as evidenced by the research, provides the foundation for students to begin thinking of themselves as agents of social change and peacebuilders. Well-crafted and scaffolded experiences expose students to the ongoing impact of colonial violence, and plant and nurture the seeds of peacebuilding in the young participants.

Rosthern Junior College, like many Mennonite institutions, emphasizes the peace position of Anabaptist theology. While the roots of this pacifist theology can be found in the writings of early Anabaptists such as Menno Simons, how this philosophy of peace is enacted has been interpreted

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[1] Personal communication, 2011.

in various ways and continues to evolve. Although the mission statement of RJC refers to "peacemaking," current interpretations frequently use the term "peacebuilding," recognizing the relational work needed to make peace. Peacebuilding, as defined by peace studies scholar Reina Neufeldt,

> refers to efforts undertaken before, during, or after violent conflict which focus not only on stopping violence, but also address and transform the deeply-rooted structural issues and divisive social relationships that drive conflict.[2]

Indubitably, colonialism, "the historical process whereby the 'West' attempts systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the 'non-West,'"[3] is a violent conflict, the effects of which continue to impact much of the world's population through ongoing physical, social, psychological, and economic violence. The most devastating effects of colonialism are borne by Indigenous populations, as revealed by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the ongoing inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, which parallel similar inquiries in South Africa and Central America. Neoliberalism, like colonialism, continues to negate the value of the non-West by moving

> the State's center of gravity away from regulation, social investment (e.g., universal public schooling), and mild redistributions of wealth; and moves that center instead toward indulgence of corporate interests (e.g., tax breaks), bailouts, and heightened policing of the social disaster associated with unrestrained markets.[4]

Neoliberal economic policies combined with globalization have continued the economic and social violence begun by colonialism evidenced in increased migration and the exploitation of workers, particularly in the

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[2] Reina C. Neufeldt, *Ethics for Peacebuilders: A Practical Guide* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 5.

[3] Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1998), 16.

[4] Brian Michael Goss, Joan Pedro-Cabaña, and Mary Rachel Gould, "Introduction: Washed Up on the Shores of Neoliberal Globalization," in *Talking Back to Globalization*, ed. Brian Michael Goss, Joan Pedro-Cabaña, and Mary Rachel Gould (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016), xix.

Global South. The need for peacebuilders who understand these complexities is increasingly urgent. By participating in ALSO, secondary school students are exposed to these complexities and encouraged to begin exploring their role as contributors to the issues and the solutions.

Through these experiences, students have begun to see the world differently, making connections between Indigenous issues in Central America and Aboriginal marginalization in Canada. This paper considers the impact this experience has had in the attitudes of young adults as they grapple with the connections between justice and peace. Central to the experience is the careful planning and scaffolding built into the program, designed to empower young adults to become doers of justice and builders of peace. RJC's ALSO program can potentially provide a blueprint for peace and social justice action for adolescents.

Rosthern Junior College
Rosthern Junior College is a historic Mennonite high school, founded in 1905 on the Canadian Prairies.[5] From its beginnings as the German-English Academy to its present iteration, a recursive relationship between church and school has been evident. A comment from the founding meetings clearly expresses this relationship: "What our school is now our church will be later."[6] While the initial purpose of the school was to provide a good education in the German language that would ground students in biblical principles, changing demographics and historical events refocused those goals. By the 1970s, according to historian Frank Epp, the emphasis shifted to "Mennonite specialties such as nonresistance" and the "thought processes and value systems of the students. The intention was to give to those students a richer and fuller life and through them, in their respective professions, a strong contribution to society."[7] In the ensuing decades, the desire to instill Anabaptist values that will ground the spiritual, ethical, and practical

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[5] While the school was founded by Russian Mennonites, the student body has always been ecumenical. Currently, approximately 40 percent of the students have Mennonite roots. The majority of students are Saskatchewan residents, with additional representation from other provinces as well as other countries.

[6] Frank H. Epp, *Education with a Plus: The Story of Rosthern Junior College* (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Press, 1975), 22.

[7] Ibid., 374-75.

foundations of RJC students has led to the development of intentionally focused programs. The current mission statement embodies these intentions: "Rosthern Junior College, in partnership with home and church, seeks to nurture the development of each student's identity and potential in the preparation for a life of faith, service and peacemaking."[8]

The notion of service to the broader community has always been a core value. In early years this notion manifested itself in workdays, opportunities for students to help in the harvest of vegetables grown specifically to supplement the school's larders. In later years, workdays became an opportunity for students to be ambassadors and hopefully receive a donation for the school. As a student in the mid-1970s, I remember participating in volunteer opportunities that included flood clean-up with Mennonite Disaster Service and dorm cleaning at a children's home in northern Saskatchewan. These opportunities were obviously created to instill the value of altruism in the participants, but preparation and debriefing were minimal. However, I believe these experiences were the roots of current initiatives.

While no one is sure when exactly the ALSO program was established, there is general agreement that it came about in the early years of this millennium and has gradually evolved to be more focused in its mission and purpose, through the building of relationships with diverse community members and agencies. ALSO is housed within the Christian Ethics program, a series of required courses. For one week each academic year, all students participate in "intensive times of 'learning while serving'"[9] locally, nationally, and internationally. Various ALSO opportunities are available. Canadian ALSO trips are covered through student tuition, while international trips have an additional cost, limiting participation to students with financial means. In developing the program, teachers have used the pedagogical framework of service learning.

Service Learning
Service learning has its roots in the concept of experiential education fostered

[8] Rosthern Junior College, "Mission Statement," https://rosthernjuniorcollege.ca, accessed August 15, 2016.
[9] Rosthern Junior College, "ALSO," https://rosthernjuniorcollege.ca/academics/excellence-in-education/learning-and-service, accessed August 15, 2016.

by John Dewey and Jane Addams, and became popularized in the 1960s with the establishment of the Peace Corps in the US and in college work-study programs.[10] Differentiating service learning from volunteerism, internships, and practica became necessary as such programs grew in popularity. Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher provide this definition of service learning:

> A credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Unlike extracurricular voluntary service, service learning is a course-based service experience that produces the best outcomes when meaningful service activities are related to the course material through reflection activities such as directed writings, small group discussions, and class presentations.[11]

The ALSO program at RJC fits within the parameters of service learning, since it is a course-based learning experience falling under the umbrella of Christian Ethics. The careful development of relationships with host organizations enables staff to prepare students for the experiences that they will have. Whether they are working with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) locally, Out of the Cold in Calgary, Habitat for Humanity in Alabama, or MCC in Central America, students are introduced to the goals and purpose of the organizations and tasks that they might undertake. Preparation for the ALSO trips varies; students going to Central America will have had weekly meetings, basic Spanish, and an introduction to political and social history. Many of these students will be part of the Peace and Justice Christian Ethics class. Staff accompany students on these trips, and daily debriefings are the norm. In addition, carefully structured journal prompts, such as these, guide students in reflective writing:

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[10] Geraldine Balzer, "Why Go to Guatemala: International Service Learning and Canadian High School Students," in *Contemporary Studies in Canadian Curriculum: Principles, Portraits and Practices*, ed. Darren Stanley and Kelly Young (Calgary: Detselig Press, 2011), 125-50.
[11] Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, "Implementing Service-Learning in Higher Education," *Journal of Higher Education* 67, no. 2 (1996): 221.

   • Tell me about a 'need' that you saw today that you had never really noticed or thought of before. What is one thing you can do to respond to that need in the world?

   • Tell me about someone you met today. What was their story? What did you learn from them?

   • How can service be understood as a part of your value system? Give examples from the work you did today.

   • What is one thing you learned this week? Have you changed in any way? What new questions or insights about the world and society do you have as a result of what you did this week?

   While these experiences are short in duration, they provide students with a way to consider social justice issues and develop personal responses to issues. Staff, parents, and supporters of RJC hope that students will thereby become proponents of social justice and peace rooted in the Anabaptist tradition.

   An obvious goal of the ALSO program is attitudinal change, but as Randy Stoecker points out, "service learning can also reinforce stereotypes of the poor, oppressed, and excluded."[12] This happens within the program when students echo the "poor but happy" trope in describing community children.

Methodology

My longitudinal case study employed a modified narrative inquiry methodology,[13] using conversational interviews with individual participants to generate field and research texts representing their experiences in Central America and after their return. Digital photos were part of the field texts. There was a recursive element to the creation of the field texts as we took the texts and photos to each participant for further reflection. I accompanied the students to Central America in the role of participant researcher, collecting field notes, engaging in mini-interviews and group discussions, as well as using digital cameras to collect visual texts. My position as a researcher

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[12] Randy Stoecker, *Liberating Service Learning and the Rest of Higher Education* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2016), 5.

[13] This type of methodology is outlined in D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

shifted over the six years of data collection. With each subsequent trip, I became less of an outsider; I was familiar to the students and the members of host communities—I was part of the team. Because of my ongoing relationship to the program and the analysis of the data collected, RJC staff sought my expertise in developing the ALSO program. As a qualitative researcher, I recognize my subjectivity in this research. I also acknowledge that I have chosen to conduct it because I recognize the positive potential in thoughtfully developed programs—and the exploitative possibilities in programs that do not respect local contexts.

The data collected in the study involves students who participated from 2007 to 2012. I conducted individual interviews with each participant at the end of the academic year in which they had travelled to Guatemala. A research assistant with no previous connection to the participants conducted follow-up interviews, enabling students to tell their own stories rather than telling them in relation to my own account. Past participants were invited to reflect on their experience, tell stories associated with the photos, and speculate on how the opportunity impacted their philosophy and life choices. The size of the sample pool and the voluntary nature of participation is a limitation of the study. However, as with much qualitative research, the individual impact of the experience is evident even if the findings are not generalizable. Each student's story is their own, and their interpretation of that impact is simply that, a personal reflection.

Context

RJC's trips are planned in conjunction with MCC's Connecting Peoples program, which "sponsors learning tours as part of its mission to be a channel for interchange between churches and community groups around the world, so that all may grow and be transformed."[14] Although each trip is individual, there are nevertheless many similarities among them. Upon arrival, the coordinator, who will be guide and translator, meets the student group at the airport. Following an in-country orientation, students travel to communities where they participate in work projects and are hosted by local families.

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14 Mennonite Central Committee, "Memorandum of Understanding," www.mcc.org/sites/mcc.org/files/media/common/documents/mccltmou.pdf, accessed August 15, 2016.

Participant Stories

In the spring of 2013, a graduate student interviewed thirteen participants, several from each of the previous six years of ALSO trips. Each one identified how they thought their experience was currently impacting their life and future plans. Their ability to make such connections is important to the future of a program which, in keeping with RJC's mission, "seeks to nurture the development of each student's identity and potential in the preparation for a life of faith, service and peacemaking." If, as Juan Pablo Morales**,** a Guatemalan community leader and activist, claims, peace and social justice are inseparable, then exposure to social justice issues through the ALSO program should be foundational in nurturing peacebuilders. What was evident throughout the interviews was the participants' ongoing engagement with the ideas and dilemmas they had witnessed as they determined how to be instruments of change in the world. As one would expect, participants farthest removed from their high school days had clearer ideas of vocation and engagement in the adult world; however, all who chose to be interviewed demonstrated how they are challenged to bring justice to their worlds.

Three participants from ALSO 2012 volunteered to be interviewed. Since their participation in the program was the most recent, their memories of the activities and their experiences were the most vivid. Kayla[15] had completed her first year of university and was questioning the professional direction she had chosen. As is the case with many of the participants, she understands that the experience was more about her growth as an individual and as a citizen: "Not all of what the trip was for is helping people but also for learning and helping ourselves." She described it as giving her "a broader sense of how the world works" and an understanding that "learning isn't just books and teachers, but also getting out there, teaching yourselves, learning from different people." Kayla began her university program believing her chosen profession would enable her to work for social justice in society, but quickly became disillusioned. Ultimately, she changed programs in her quest to make a difference.

Elizabeth and Michelle both chose to work for a year, and then travel and volunteer internationally. Michelle has become much more

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[15] All names are pseudonyms. All interviewees signed consent forms, and the study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan research ethics panel.

aware of herself as a consumer. Her consideration of the economic impact of our consumer society has led her to consider her relationship to wage employment: "It's made me think how it's not just important to get a good job and make enough money for yourself and live your life without seeing what is going on everywhere else." Elizabeth, like Michelle and Kayla, was struggling with her place as an advocate of social justice: "Definitely changed my way of thinking and how I consider things. I think finding a way to really live out what I saw or what I wanted to change is hard, but it keeps me thinking of what I can continue to do." Subsequently, Elizabeth and Michelle have volunteered internationally twice, and have entered university in nursing and education.

Both ALSO 2011 participants had completed one year of university. Cindy felt her time in the communities was too short, and felt a longer period would have enabled her to become more involved and make a greater difference. For that reason, she was working toward certification in Teaching English as a Second Language. She has determined that "life is too short to just do whatever and live idly. I would prefer to care more about others than spend my life thinking about myself." Carmen's experience with food sustainability projects in Guatemala and El Salvador led her to enroll in an agricultural degree. Like Kayla, she quickly became disillusioned with her choice: "international agriculture is awesome, and then I took Agribusiness . . . and said I hate this." The disconnect between subsistence agriculture and food sustainability that she observed in Central America conflicted with the ideology of agriculture as big business developed in Canadian universities. Her disillusionment with this worldview resulted in a change of direction because, as she stated, "I think it's mostly being kind, you know, and not forgetting that we're not the only people in the world." In her mind, agribusiness forgot the people of Central America.

The two young women who travelled to Central America in 2010 were beginning to struggle with the larger issues of colonialism and neoliberalism. Both had completed three years of university and were pursuing careers in teaching. During this trip, students were exposed to Canada's involvement in resource extraction and the human and environmental impact of mining. Danielle had come to realize that the world does not necessarily see Canadians as benevolent: "we think as Canadians we have such a good

reputation in other countries and we have to learn that we are not as innocent as we think." Her awareness of these issues "influenced the structure of my projects in international studies classes," and she had become more critical of charities, needing to know what she was supporting and how her money was being used.

Amanda admitted that she was looking for something to be passionate about. She recognized that her participation in ALSO was valuable because service and learning happened simultaneously. She also identified a problem with service learning: it is frequently more advantageous to the student group than to the host community. She questions whether the work she did was of benefit to the community, but realizes that she entered into the world of global citizenship through this experience.

Jennifer and Calvin travelled to Guatemala in 2009. Following graduation, Jennifer chose to return to Guatemala as part of a longer post-secondary program. While her ALSO experience introduced her to global issues, her extended stay enabled her to "be globally aware of the things that were going on and realize the consequences of the stuff that our countries are doing." Like Danielle, she recognized the impact of neoliberalism on the Global South and was committed to spreading that awareness. After resisting education as a career choice, Jennifer ultimately recognized her strengths and the way that they meshed with her desire to be a global citizen. Ultimately she realized that teachers "have the attention of a lot of young people at an impressionable age."

Calvin was now bringing a more nuanced and analytical view to his ALSO experience, seeing the larger picture: "We could actually see what organizations are trying to do and what the problems are and how people are trying to address them." Like Michelle and Elizabeth, Calvin is challenged by the consumer culture and how purchasing electronic items, for example, is normalized regardless of the cost.

Magdalene, the only ALSO 2008 participant who volunteered to be interviewed, is able to clearly articulate her post-secondary journey, connecting many of her decisions to her exposure to social justice issues. Introduced to the dilemma of migrant workers while in Central America, she decided to learn more about their circumstances and chose to become an apple picker after graduation. From there she travelled to Thailand as a

volunteer. Although her original plan had been to study theater and film, these experiences with marginalized people caused her to choose psychiatric nursing, which "is all about hearing people's stories and serving vulnerable populations." Magdalene has an interest in working with the homeless and people with addictions. Ultimately, however, she wants "to go somewhere and train local people, like training counselors to work with women who've been involved with the sex trade." The concept of empowering local people echoes the goals of MCC.

The three participants from my first ALSO trip had been out of high school for six years at the time of their final interview. Each had chosen a direction in life and was working toward a goal. While Katrina still had a very idealistic view about volunteering and her ability to make a difference, she was committed to involvement in international and community organizations: "I just know there's kids out there that are way more in need than I am. I have thirty dollars a month I can spare, so why not give it?" She identifies the trip to Guatemala as planting a seed in her, a desire to make a difference whether locally or farther afield.

Carson focused on issues of consumerism in his interview. While he had always recognized the importance of fair trade, he now identified trade as a political issue. Recognizing the problems with fair trade, he identifies his new awareness as central to making good consumer decisions. His maturity and further life experiences have enabled him to become a critical thinker as he weighs his purchasing options and priorities.

Of all the participants, Felicity most clearly articulated the impact that the ALSO program had on her life choices. Prior to this trip, she had planned to be a medical doctor, perhaps a neurosurgeon. Exposure to the health challenges faced by community members caused her to rethink her goals: "After I was in Guatemala, I really started thinking about how we could make sustainable and local healthcare practices that are accessible to everyone, that we use our resources and people around us to aid in people's health, whether that be physical, mental, spiritual." Felicity majored in Gender Studies, and volunteered on a sexual assault crisis line as she extended her awareness of health and social issues impacting women in her community. At the time of this interview, she had begun training as a midwife, a health profession she saw as empowering rather than pathologizing women.

Conclusion

RJC's ALSO program is intimately connected to the mission of nurturing the development of each student's identity and potential in preparing for a life of faith, service, and peacebuilding. The impact of ALSO cannot be isolated from other experiences offered at the school and the nurturing students receive at home and in their faith communities. ALSO, however, crystalizes the school's goals in one short but intense experience, providing opportunity for staff to address issues of social justice locally and internationally. It opens the doors to conversations about the marginalization of Indigenous peoples caused by colonialism and furthered through neoliberal policies, and the ways faith can be lived out in the world through relationships, however fleeting, with individuals and communities in a very different context. John Paul Lederach states that "peacebuilding requires a vision of relationship"[16] of "artful connection,"[17] and Vanessa de Oliviera Andreotti wonders "whether knowledge is enough to change how people imagine themselves, their relationships with each other and the world at large."[18]

Participation in ALSO sets the stage for global citizenship, helping students to move outside classroom knowledge and see a world beyond their local communities, entering into relationship, albeit superficial and short term, with members of a very different community. These connections provide "a space for debate and an unexpected publicness emerges that is relevant to, for example, precarious youth looking for ways to take their place in worldmaking."[19] As Lynette Schultz puts it, "these people demand that the histories of colonial struggle for land and sovereignty and for even the possibility of leading lives of full humanity be heard at every level, local to global."[20]

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[16] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 35.

[17] Ibid., 162.

[18] Vanessa de Oliviera Andreotti, "Global Citizenship Education Otherwise: Pedagogical and Theoretical Insights," in *Decolonizing Global Citizenship Educations,* ed. Ali A. Abdi, Lynette Shultz, and Thashika Pillay (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015), 224.

[19] Lynette Shultz, "Global Citizenship or International Trade? A Decolonial Analysis of Canada's New International Education Policy" in *Decolonizing Global Citizenship Educations*, 115-16.

[20] Ibid., 116.

Local communities have the opportunity to tell their stories, painful stories that put a face on the violence of colonialism and neoliberal economic policies. As adolescents confront the realities of colonial displacement and marginalization in Guatemala, they are also led to consider the Canadian context and the social, cultural, economic, and spiritual violence perpetuated against Indigenous people at home. As they become aware of the exploitative role Canadian resource extraction companies play in Central America, they are challenged to consider alternative consumer practices. As Juan Pablo Morales has so poignantly said, "without bread, there is no justice and without justice there is no peace."[21] Students are challenged to see their place in building structures that will lead to a more just and therefore peaceful world.

As the quest for experiential learning opportunities becomes an increasingly popular drawing card in Canadian educational programming, the need to carefully consider the purpose and the impact of such initiatives is increasingly important, RJC's ALSO program can provide a blueprint for a program that carefully sets the stage for participants to "move from isolation . . . toward a capacity to envision and act on the basis that we live in and form part of a web of interdependent relationships."[22] While this may seem like a monumental task for adolescents, it potentially sows the seeds, which, if nurtured, will grow into peacebuilders of the future.

Geraldine Balzer is Assistant Professor of Curriculum Studies in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

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[21] Juan Pablo Morales, personal communication, 2011
[22] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 173.

Eight Ways to Strengthen Mennonite Peacebuilding

Lisa Schirch

Introduction

The Martyrs Mirror, as its name suggests, offers images and reflections of Mennonite suffering. The Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival in June 2016 provided an opportunity to hold up a "peacebuilding mirror" and reflect on our collective peacebuilding. What have Mennonites learned about peacebuilding over the last 500 years? We have some shining contributions and stories to tell. We also have some significant flaws.

When I arrived in Afghanistan in 2010 to research the peace process,[1] a tribal elder welcomed me, saying, "Ah, you are from the tribe called Mennonite." I think he meant this as a compliment. It echoed what Mennonites found in Somalia, where they are known as the "peace clan."[2] I came to Afghanistan on the coattails of Mennonite humanitarians who had befriended and supported Muslim peacebuilding in the region over many decades. Being part of the Mennonite tribe signaled that I was not part of the military tribe. This increased my safety and my ability to work.

Mennonites have contributed to global peace and the relief of suffering. We are quite gifted at loving people in far-off corners of the world. Peacebuilding experts in the United Nations, in governments around the world, rabbis in the US, imams in Muslim centers like Qom, Iran, and others regard Mennonite peacebuilding as exemplary. Mennonite peacebuilding is making noteworthy contributions to the wider field of peacebuilding. At the UN, more than a dozen high-level staff have degrees in conflict transformation from Mennonite-affiliated schools. In remote parts of the world, Mennonite-trained practitioners are hard at work protecting human rights and building relationships between conflicted groups. Mennonite

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[1] See Lisa Schirch, *Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process for Afghanistan.* PeaceWorks (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2011). This document is a report on my five research trips to Afghanistan.

[2] Peter M. Sensenig, *Peace Clan: Mennonite Peacemaking in Somalia* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

Central Committee (MCC) is supporting local peace efforts in hundreds of communities. And in New York and Washington, Mennonites are promoting peace to the UN, the US Congress, and the Pentagon.

Mennonite peacebuilding is also responsible for promoting key peacebuilding ideas. Matthew 5 records Jesus' call for people to love their enemies. The impetus to reach out and listen to people with who are different and hold opposing beliefs is central to peacebuilding. Mennonites have played a key role in promoting the idea that negotiation and dialogue between people in conflict is an important element in transforming conflict.

Mennonite emphasis on supporting local communities reflects a belief that Jesus often spoke and lived with the poor and those referred to as "the least of these." Local ownership and empowerment of local actors is often rare in the world of secular peacebuilding and development that relies on top-down approaches where white "experts" tell local people of color how to solve their problems. A more humble approach focuses less on outside superstars who come in and make big changes. Instead, peacebuilding should empower and highlight the vision and hard work of local people, who are their own experts and guides to a just peace.

However, there is an underside to this public witness for peace. Mennonites are not so gifted at loving their neighbors within the church in the midst of conflict or theological disagreement. Amongst our own tribe, we have had 500 years of internal conflict and division. We have a history of ugliness and social persecution of each other. Our communal culture teaches us to give icy stares and cold shoulders, and to use the well-known social torture technique of "the silent treatment." While Mennonite peacebuilding has gained attention and reputation in the wider world, within the Anabaptist community peacebuilding skills and practices are scarce. One of the most striking elements of Mennonite peacebuilding is a vast disparity between being able to help others through conflict yet being relatively unable to transform major and minor differences and conflicts within the church.[3]

The field of peacebuilding stresses the value of self-reflection. We can do effective peacebuilding only if we take time to reflect on what works

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[3] Lisa Schirch and Verne Schirch, "Peacebuilding in a Divided, Pacifist Church," *The Mennonite,* August 1, 2014, https://themennonite.org/issues/178/articles/NEWS_ANALYSIS_ Peacebuilding_ in_a_divided_pacifist_church.

well and what is challenging. What didn't work, and what can we learn from our failures? As we reflect on 500 years of peace and conflict within the Mennonite church, we need to look in the mirror—both to pat ourselves on the back for our peacebuilding and to consider how we might improve it in the future.

This article examines and juxtaposes the gifts, challenges, and blind spots for interpreting an Anabaptist theology of love of enemies and peacebuilding. It presents a two-handed approach to peacebuilding, and discusses commonalities and differences in Mennonite communities exploring creation care, and dealing with sexual violence, racism, white supremacy, and the inclusion of LGBTQ people in the church. The article began in a set of eight art pieces I created in preparation for the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival.[4] Several of the pieces challenge Mennonites to listen more closely in order to remember that Anabaptism was born on the margins of the church, and that today we must continue to listen to voices on the margins. Together this article and the art ask this question: How might we bring more integrity to Mennonite peacebuilding? Below I offer eight ways to strengthen Mennonite peacebuilding, each accompanied by a related art piece.

1. Embrace a Two-Handed Approach

Echoing other Protestants, Mennonite theologians have advocated a two-kingdom theology, where Mennonites live in God's kingdom while the State rules the secular kingdom. Some Mennonites interpret this approach to mean that we should withdraw from the secular kingdom, and not challenge or resist its direct or structural violence. Both conservative and progressive Mennonites do withdraw from the secular kingdom and are counter-cultural in significant ways. However, two-kingdom theology becomes problematic when it is used to justify apathy toward an unjust status quo for other social groups suffering from state policies. It also can play a role in justifying Mennonite support for aggressive state policies and leaders. It can suggest

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[4] I presented the article with the artwork as part of the keynote opening addresses at the event. I used Mennonite art forms in plain birch panels, and then aged and distressed the wood to make them look like older artifacts. At Eastern Mennonite University, we integrate art into our teaching.

that Mennonites can both be pacifists and allow the state to use violent actions to secure the interests of the White upper class.

Two-kingdom theology does not provide an adequate platform for understanding the challenges of peacebuilding. In a democracy, Mennonites have the right and responsibility to engage with the state. The state is a complex mix of governance for the public good (hospitals, roads, schools) and taxation for war, unfair trade rules, and policies that discriminate and harm people. While it is rare to have options for voting that reflect Mennonite values, Mennonites still have an obligation to use their power to vote for political leaders who offer the least harm and the most good.

Mennonite peacebuilding requires a "two-handed theology," whereby we both reach out one hand to love those with whom we disagree, and put one hand up to resist injustice and to push and advocate for justice and peace. Instead of imagining that Mennonites live in an imaginary and otherworldly kingdom, we should be engaging directly with governments to challenge and urge reform toward values that reflect Jesus' teachings on human dignity.

Figure 1 illustrates a two-handed approach to peacebuilding. Feminist scholar and nonviolence practitioner Barbara Deming borrowed Buddhist teachings to develop this approach to nonviolence in her book *Revolution and Equilibrium*.

> With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, "Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life." But then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised out-stretched – maybe with love and sympathy, maybe not – but always outstretched. . . . With this hand we say, "I won't let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now, and I'll be here when you are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another."[5]

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[5] Barbara Deming, *Revolution and Equilibrium* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971). Cited in Laura Slattery, Ken Butigan, Veronica Pelicaric, and Ken Preston-Pile, *Engage: Exploring*

Figure 1

A two-handed theology provides Mennonite peacebuilding with a biblical focus on love of enemies and victims through offering both a hand out in relationship to those with whom we disagree and acknowledging the structures of power and privilege that must be pushed to bring about change. In a two-handed theology of peacebuilding we must find ways to love the Taliban and the US military, to demand that Black Lives Matter, and to find a

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Nonviolent Living (Oakland, CA: Pace e Bene Press, 2005); http://www.paceebene.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-Two-Hands-of-Nonviolence.pdf.

way to love the police, Palestinians and Israelis, and victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse.

2. Move beyond Enemy Language

When I went to Iraq with MCC in 2005, Iraqi peacebuilders told me directly, "It is great that you Mennonites teach and support people in community-based peacebuilding, but what we really need you to do is to teach your government and military about peacebuilding. Peacebuilding doesn't land in a helicopter. It grows from the ground up."

From my point of view, based on listening to local people across Asia and Africa, directly educating and challenging the US military to understand peacebuilding is a natural extension of the journey of Mennonite peacebuilding and love for those with whom we disagree.[6] When I started attending and speaking at military conferences and training military units in peacebuilding, some Mennonites questioned whether this was a "Mennonite" approach to peacebuilding. Some denounced me. Some wrote in church papers that I could not be Mennonite if I engaged with the US military. For them, working with the military was a distraction from, or even a betrayal of, the real work of Mennonite peacebuilding. Instead of engaging with the US military, some said I should be trying to dialogue with Al Qaeda or teaching the Taliban about peacebuilding. In their purity narrative, engaging with the military defiled the whole community and was a departure from the Mennonite path.

What this criticism toward my work highlighted was the confusion and inconsistency in how Mennonites define and use the word "enemy." Mennonites adopt "enemy" language from Matthew 5, where Jesus tells us to love our enemies and to do good to those who harm us. How do we define an enemy today? Linguist and cognitive scientist George Lakoff highlights the common problem in how we communicate.[7] The very language we use shapes the way we think. If we talk about enemies, we must first find enemies. Language matters. The word "enemy" is deeply problematic.

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[6] I discuss this in *Handbook on Human Security: A Civil-Military-Police Curriculum*, ed. Lisa Schirch (The Hague: Alliance for Peacebuilding, GPPAC, Kroc Institute, 2016).
[7] George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate. The Essential Guide for Progressives* (Chelsea, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2014).

The US military is required to refer to an adversary as an "enemy." Military doctrine is full of references on how to "engage the enemy." In this context, "engage" means "use violence." To engage the enemy means to drop a bomb or fire a weapon at another group of people. When I speak at conferences in the Pentagon or on military bases, I challenge the military's requirement to think in terms of an "enemy." The world is not a simple matter of dividing people into camps of allies and enemies. In many regions, local people are just as afraid of the US military as they are of insurgents or terrorist groups. These people are stakeholders. They have a stake in what happens to their community, and the US military should listen to them and respect them.

Peacebuilders do not use the word "enemy," since this term is seen as unhelpful and dehumanizing, falsely asserting that the blame lies only on one side and limiting the understanding of all the people affected by conflict. Instead, the peacebuilding field uses the term "stakeholders" to refer to everyone who has a stake in a conflict, including those waging conflict and those suffering from it. The core principle in peacebuilding is to engage with all stakeholders, to address the needs and interests of all groups.

When Mennonites talk about loving their enemies, they often refer to *the state's* enemies. However, the state's enemies are not *the Mennonites'* enemies. We need to think harder about those with whom we disagree. Often they are not far-off strangers but people who live close to us, such as people in the US military, people who voted differently than we do, or neighbors who think differently than we do. Mennonites take pride in their relationships with *the state's* enemies in Iran and Palestine, but many balk at talking to the US military, the Israeli settler, the neighbor who voted for Trump, or the religious leader who denounces LGBTQ people. To accept the state's definition of "the enemy" is to make a serious error. Jesus' teaching to "love enemies" applies to all those with whom we disagree, both far and near.

Mennonites laud the opportunity to have dinner with the president of Iran as an opportunity to love "our enemy."[8] But how does this differ from speaking on a panel or sharing dinner with a US military general to discuss

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[8] Arli Klassen and Daryl Byler, "A dialogue toward peace with Iran," *The Mennonite*, October 21, 2008, www.themennonite.org/opinion/dialogue-toward-peace-iran/, accessed August 20, 2017.

Figure 2

peacebuilding, or reaching out to dialogue with a conservative religious leader who advocates hatred toward Palestinians or LGBTQ people? The language of "enemies" becomes problematic in either scenario. If you are engaging in a relationship with someone, you are seeing that person's *humanity*. This is the point of Jesus' teaching. To call any person an enemy is an act of conflict in itself, and introduces unnecessary friction into a relationship.

While Mennonites can link our engagement with stakeholders or with all sides of a conflict on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5, we don't need to call people our enemies. This language twists our understanding of humanity and

building peace. It should not be surprising or scandalous for Mennonites to talk to the military, to Trump voters, Israeli settlers, sexual offenders, or the preacher or white nationalist shouting extremism. It should be a logical part of our pacifism. Mennonite peacebuilders need to think of loving all those with whom we disagree, those who suffer, and those who are our neighbors. We need to love everyone—including people in the military.

Figure 2 illustrates the work of planting seeds of peace in the Pentagon. One idea seed is for the US military to no longer require usage of the term "enemy." If we learn the world is a complex place, full of ambiguity and people with mixed interests, we are more likely to be cautious about using force. The concept of an enemy is simplistic, blinding us from shared interests and a shared humanity. Mennonites too can recall this when we start slipping into enemy language.

3. Rethink Martyrdom in a Mennonite-Muslim Dialogue

A martyr is someone who suffers or dies for his or her convictions. A martyr is someone with a choice, but a victim has no choice. A victim suffers for no good cause. In Christianity, Jesus is viewed as dying on behalf of the good of others. In the *Martyrs Mirror*, the community of believers remembers and honors Anabaptists who suffered for their beliefs. Martyrdom seems to make suffering seem worthwhile. Today we hear of martyrs who die wearing a suicide vest that kills others. This concept of martyrdom is quite different from the idea of being willing to die to help save others. Martyrdom is a dangerous concept: it can glorify suffering and it can justify violence. How can Mennonites explore martyrdom together with Muslims?

Michael Sattler was one of the earliest Anabaptists to risk death for his pacifism. Authorities martyred him largely because of his refusal to fight Muslims. At his trial, Sattler was reported to have said that "if the Turks should invade the country, no resistance ought to be offered them; and if it were right to wage war, he would rather take the field against the Christians than against the Turks; and it is certainly a great matter, to set the greatest enemies of our holy faith against us."[9] Sattler died as a martyr, willing to give

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[9] Gustav Bossert, Jr., Harold S. Bender, and C. Arnold Snyder, "Sattler, Michael (d. 1527)," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online,* (1989), http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Sattler,_Michael, accessed May 6, 2017.

Figure 3

his life for his belief in not killing others.

At a time when prominent political leaders blame Muslims and cry out for a war against Islam as well as immigrants, Mennonites offer a different view.[10] At Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Muslims come to study peacemaking and they tell us they leave as better Muslims. In fact, we have more Muslim women wearing head coverings at EMU than we have

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[10] James R. Krabill, David W. Shenk, and Linford Stutzman, ed., *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims: A Calling for Presence in the Way of Christ* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2004).

Mennonite women doing so.

Figure 3 illustrates the teaching in Matthew 5, and the relationship between Mennonites and Muslims. Three of my colleagues have been martyred because of their work for peace in Muslim countries. Glen Lapp, an MCC volunteer in Afghanistan, was killed along with nine other humanitarians delivering health care to remote Afghan villages. Javaid Akhtar was killed in Pakistan by militant groups opposing his work with Just Peace Initiatives, a program started by EMU graduate Ali Gohar. Tom Fox, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraq, was killed because of his human rights advocacy on behalf of Muslim men in Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. A top Muslim cleric in London and Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Iran called for those holding Fox's CPT team hostage to release these good men.[11]

Of course many other thousands of people have died in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Most of them are innocent victims who did not choose to risk their lives for peace. But there are a significant number of Afghans, Pakistanis, and Iraqis, as well as people from other countries who are devoted to peace and the dignity of all human beings. For that cause they are willing to die. They are potential martyrs. How can Mennonites work with Muslims to rethink the concept of martyrdom today? In an increasingly Islamaphobic world, Mennonite voices are on the margins. Nevertheless, Mennonites have an important and unique role in reaching out to Muslims and working together for peace.

4. Listen to Victims

The *Martyrs Mirror* image of Dirk Willems is a common symbol of Mennonite love of enemies. Willems was an Anabaptist who escaped from prison, where he was serving a death sentence for his beliefs. The prison guard chases him across a frozen pond. The guard falls through the ice. Instead of running away and saving himself, Willems rescues his pursuer. Like Michael Sattler, Willems is held up as a martyr to revere. Willems went so far as to save not just any life but the life of an official who would later put him to death.

Like martyrdom, Mennonites focus on love of the "enemy" as the

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[11] "Terror suspect's Iraq kidnap plea," *BBC News*, December 7, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_ news/4506970.stm, accessed May 2, 2017.

Figure 4

ultimate expression of faith. That may be fine and good in many contexts, but the celebration of martyrdom and love of enemies can silently ignore victims who have no choice in their suffering. In the case of sexual violence, churches often extend an embrace to offenders while doing little to support victims. Some Mennonite theologians who spoke out most clearly to bring an end to war were covertly assaulting female students and colleagues in Mennonite institutions.[12] While Mennonites have had a significant voice in

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[12] Rachel Waltner Goossen, "'Defanging the Beast'": Mennonite Responses to John Howard

advocating for the end of war, Mennonite women have waged an internal nonviolent struggle to end sexual violence within the church and to recognize the violence of processes that silence victims. How is it that the church most concerned with state violence has fallen significantly behind the state's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence? What happens when Mennonites are called to love both victims and oppressors? What does it really mean for Mennonites to love offenders? Does it mean looking the other way or forgiving them even when they continue to abuse? Or does it mean holding them to account and insisting that the abuse stop?[13]

Figure 4 is a reimagined portrait of the Dirk Willems story. In this version, Willems symbolizes the Mennonite church reaching out to save a perpetrator of sexual violence. Around the offender in the water is a victim of the sexual perpetrator. The victim continues to drown while the church reaches out to rescue the perpetrator. Advocates against sexual violence witness the church's one-sided approach to protect the dignity and life of the perpetrator. Mennonites are called to love both victims and offenders. Our peace theology has not caught up with the dilemma of how to keep victims in the center of our peacebuilding when they challenge the church's integrity. In sexualized violence, the church rushes to love "the enemy." We must listen to the voices of victims on the margins. The integrity of Mennonite peacebuilding depends upon the ability to prevent sexualized violence in the church.

5. Foster Diversity and Undo White Supremacy

I grew up in Bluffton Mennonite Church in Ohio, singing "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in God's sight…." That song was my first introduction to the concept that Black Lives Matter, as illustrated in Figure 5. Yet I rarely saw anyone who was not white in the pulpit of my church. Mennonites cannot be a prophetic voice for peace in a diverse world if only Swiss, German, or Russian Mennonites head most of our institutions. We have to break out of the

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Yoder's Sexual Abuse," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no.1 (2015): 7-80.

[13] Lisa Schirch, "Afterword: To the Next Generation of Pacifist Theologians," in *John Howard Yoder: Radical Theologian*, ed. J. Denny Weaver (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 377-95.

Figure 5

ethnic hold on Mennonite institutions and do more to affirm the leadership of Anabaptists with African, Asian, Latin American, and Indigenous origins.

There is a genetic disorder known as Ehrlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) shared by many Swiss German Mennonites. My immediate and extended family suffers from this disease of the connective tissues. Our ankles, wrists, knees and shoulders rip and tear, and we have had many surgeries. We end up wearing braces and taping our bodies to keep our internal tissues together. There is irony in this genetic ailment. The physical bodies of some ethnic Mennonites with EDS mirror the body of the church. The Nigerian novelist

Chinua Achebe wrote a book called *Things Fall Apart*[14] to describe life in the Igbo tribe. I think this is also an apt title for the tribe called Mennonite. The genetic and Swiss-German cultural dominance in Mennonite institutions is not an asset but a liability. For too long, the Mennonite church leadership chose mostly white male managers who practice conformity and management rather than creative and visionary leadership. This protects the white ethnic hold on institutional power, but it does not provide the creativity or vision to renew and foster growth.

Drew Hart's *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*[15] articulates the problems with church blindness to race and racism. Because Mennonites themselves suffered persecution and because they do good works in the world, there seems to be an unstated belief that they cannot possibly be racist. Yet the assumptions of white superiority are found in every aspect of Mennonite cultural and religious life. In *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era*, Ben Goossen examines the relationship between Mennonites and German nationalism during the 19th and 20th centuries.[16] He documents how white German nationalism helped to form Mennonite identity as "a chosen nation" and included acceptance of Nazi racial identification.

Efforts to educate Mennonite institutions and staff about racism and white privilege have faced tremendous backlash. The uncomfortable truth is that Mennonites have not been willing to accept their own deep-seated narratives of white supremacy. They participated in colonial and imperial projects where white men and women set out to "save the souls" of people of color. Mennonite relief and development efforts have too often mirrored colonial thinking, where white men must head institutions in order to control and protect them. By habit and intention, these institutions remain closed to leadership by people of color.[17]

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[14] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994).

[15] Drew Hart, *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016).

[16] Ben Goossen, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2017).

[17] Regina Stolzfus and Tobin Miller Shearer gave a presentation at the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival documenting Mennonite reaction to their anti-racism training. See Tobin Miller Shearer, "White Mennonite Peacemakers: Oxymorons, Grace, and

White Mennonites need to take responsibility for whiteness by challenging white power structures. This can mean reaching out to and working with poor white communities who support racist policies and violence to people of color. If Mennonites are white, we must also take responsibility for this whiteness. We can and should witness to white Christian churches that foster racism and division.

Diversity is an asset, not a liability. Mennonite institutions need diverse leadership to bring greater integrity, creativity and vision to peacebuilding. Mennonites must be held together not by a genetic code but by an ideology that supports a Jesus-informed peacebuilding, a commitment to stand with those who suffer and to find ways of both working for justice and loving those with whom we disagree. We need diversity in leadership.

6. Listen to Voices on the Margins, Practice Tolerance, and Remember the Waterlanders

After five centuries of internal conflict, perhaps Mennonites should take a step back. The Apostle Paul does make statements about keeping the church "pure" and "without blemish" (Eph. 5: 25-27), but for centuries the church has used these passages to justify the ban and excommunication. Conflict in the church became a holy war. "Purity" became more important than "community" and "love." Each side believed God was on their side and condemned those with whom they disagreed. Paul's teachings shaped church attitudes to conflict. This is unfortunate, as Jesus offers a different approach. Jesus put far more emphasis on not judging others. His admonitions against picking out the speck of dust in your neighbors' eye before pulling out the log in your own eye (Matt. 7:5), and the warning that he who is without sin should cast the first stone (John 8:6-7) offer an alternative narrative for tolerance.

Mennonites who practice tolerance are in the minority. However, throughout our history, there have been progressive Mennonites who wanted to follow Jesus' teachings about love more than Paul's teachings about purity. While Menno Simons and other Anabaptists argued about how and when to implement the ban and excommunication in order to keep the church

Figure 6

pure, a more tolerant group of Anabaptists in the Waterland region of the Netherlands opposed coercive punishments and social torture in the mid-1500s. The Waterlanders became a strong branch of Dutch Mennonites, but they rejected the "Mennonite" label because they didn't want to be named after a person, especially someone with whom they disagreed. Other Mennonites referred to them as "De Drekwagen"—the garbage wagon—because they were open and tolerant of many other people and allowed members to marry non-Mennonites. The Waterlanders allowed more contact with outsiders

and held more progressive ideas. They held communion around a common table and offered silent prayer, rejecting some of the authoritarian elements of other Anabaptist groups.[18] They had a sense of what we today might call "the beloved community."

Too many Mennonites have meetings to talk about homosexuality without inviting any LGBTQ people to be involved. The integrity of Mennonite peacebuilding requires standing with marginalized people anywhere, including listening to and respecting the humanity of LGBTQ people and their voices on the margins of the church. Pink Menno is an organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people and those who stand in solidarity with them. Its representatives have consistently been excluded from official church processes.[19]

Early Anabaptists who did not conform to official church doctrine were convicted of heresy. Authorities ordered guards to construct an iron torture device that would literally screw down the tongue of the condemned, making it impossible for them to speak to those who came to watch their executions. Today's Mennonite institutions also silence Anabaptists who do not conform. At the 2015 Mennonite Church USA Kansas City Conference, Pink Menno member Jennifer Yoder interrupted the meeting and stood in front of the audience in her rainbow toga. She spoke out against the silencing of LGBTQ people in the very processes that are deciding whether the church can include them. In Figure 6, Yoder speaks out about the church's repression. LGBTQ activists are modern-day martyrs, suffering for their principles as they protest their repression within the Mennonite church.

As a supporter of Pink Menno, I offered to sell their t-shirts at Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in Pennsylvania in 2015. Organizers of the conference had made an agreement with conservative Mennonite churches that there would be no discussion of homosexuality during the event. In doing so, they sent a message to the LGBTQ community and their thousands of supporters in the Mennonite church that they were not welcome. MWC leaders rejected workshops offering to explore the concept

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[18] Nanne van der Zijpp, "Waterlanders," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, (1959), http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Waterlanders&oldid=134967, accessed May 6, 2017.

[19] See www.pinkmenno.org.

of homosexuality, even those that included conservative and progressive points of view. So, when the organizers caught wind of my plan, security guards descended on my car to tell me I could not sell the t-shirts.[20]

The Waterlanders set an early Anabaptist example of how to create a "welcome table" open to everyone. Mennonite peacebuilding needs to grow out of a practice of radical hospitality within our own churches. Mennonites cannot chastise the US government for not negotiating with Iran, or tell Israelis and Palestinians to dialogue with each other, if they are not willing to talk to the people in their own church who believe differently.

7. Practice What We Preach

Sigmund Freud called conflict between groups of people who were far more alike than different a "narcissism of minor differences."[21] Catholic and Protestant Lutheran church officials persecuted Anabaptists. Mirroring this treatment, Anabaptists similarly become intolerant of minor differences among themselves. Their desire to "live without sin" contributed to the adoption of social practices such as shunning and excommunication. They divided into smaller units that shared scriptural interpretations of sin, but disagreed over the form and style of excommunication. They split over clothing, such as whether to use buttons or hooks and fasteners, or what hats to wear, and over whether to allow women to preach, or to have Christian education and Sunday School programs. They had heated arguments over what type of vehicle to drive. Most recently, they cannot agree on whether to allow LGBTQ people as full members in their churches.[22]

Mennonites should model peacebuilding within their church relationships. The largest peacebuilding organization in the world is Search for Common Ground, whose stated mission is to "transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches, toward

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[20] Lisa Schirch and Jacob Mack-Boll, "No pink in MWC's rainbow: Avoiding controversy falls short of ideals for peacebuilding," *Mennonite World Review,* September 14, 2015, http://mennoworld.org/2015/09/14/opinion/opinion-no-pink-in-mwcs-rainbow/. Lisa Schirch and Jacob Mack-Boll, "Pink Reflections on MWC," *The Mennonite,* September 3, 2015, https://themennonite.org/opinion/pink-reflections-on-mwc/.

[21] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1962).

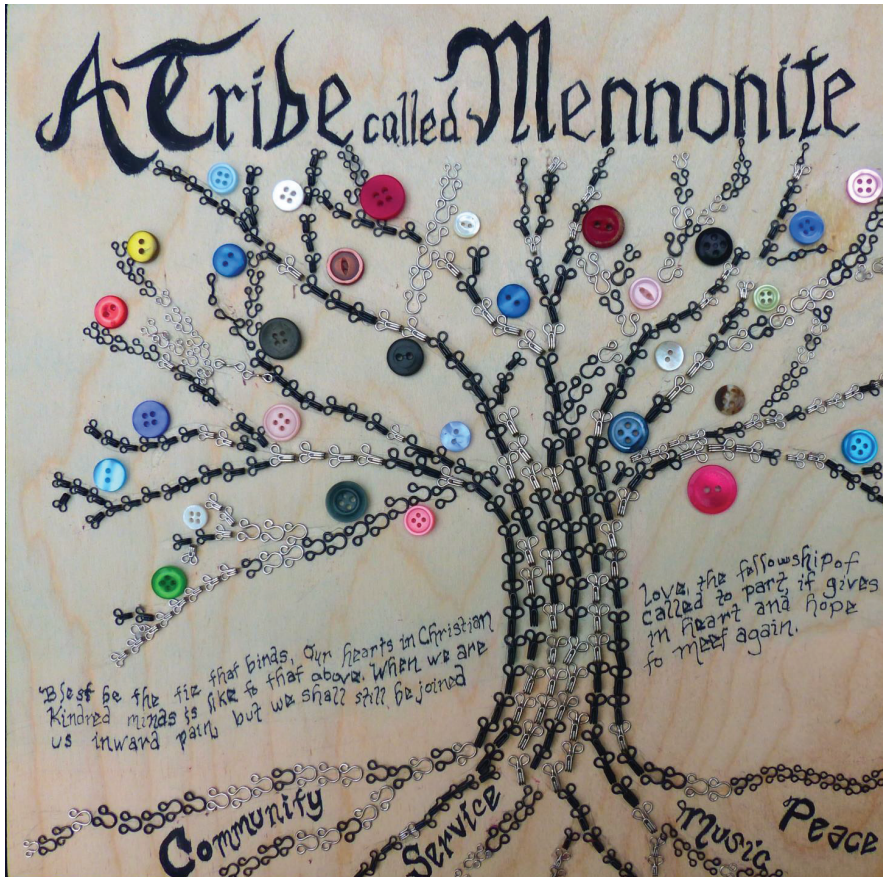[22] Schirch and Schirch, "Peacebuilding in a Divided, Pacifist Church."

Figure 7

cooperative solutions." The organization employs methods that "identify the differences, but work on the common ground."[23] On matters of theology, it might be difficult to find commonality across different types of Mennonites. Yet in practice, Mennonites continue to share a focus on community, service, peace, and music that sets us off collectively from other tribes. The integrity of global Mennonite peacebuilding rests on our ability to work through internal conflicts and to develop a coherent ideology that allows for greater

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[23] www.sfcg.org.

theological diversity in our church. Figure 7 illustrates this family tree of difference and common ground. Care for the environment is an example of common ground within Anabaptist life.

8. Find Common Ground in Environmental Sustainability
Some days I bike out in the country with my Lycra biking shorts and pass Mennonite women biking in their dresses and bonnets. Other days I'll be driving our Toyota Prius and pass an Old Mennonite family in a horse and buggy. Each time I think about the similarities and differences. My understanding of religion and theology is significantly different from that of the folks in the horse and buggy. Still, there is a commonality that sets conservative and progressive Mennonites off from other churches or even mainstream Mennonites. Figure 8 illustrates this juxtaposition.

Lines of horse and buggies appear in parking lots of Old Mennonite and Amish churches. Lines of Prius and other fuel-efficient cars equally line up in progressive Mennonite Church parking lots. The Prius is the progressive Mennonite's horse and buggy. On a workday in Harrisonburg, Virginia, many people bike to work. Again, it is often conservative Mennonites and progressive Mennonites who choose to do so, opting out of fancy cars and using gasoline in favor of transportation methods that reflect care for other people and parts of creation. At a time when Mennonite churches are in conflict over how to respond to sexual violence or whether to welcome LGBTQ people, when it comes to the environment, there is some surprising common ground, indicating that something still holds these diverse peoples together.

Looking for common ground among Mennonites is an element of creating a greater sense of integrity in peacebuilding. Sometimes the common ground cuts across the diversity of the Mennonite community in interesting ways. While conservatives and progressives disagree on many theological issues, their practices of environmental sustainability or "creation care" are more similar than those of mainline or moderate Mennonites.

Few researchers have documented the history of Anabaptist thought about and relationships to the environment. The official church's persecution of Anabaptists drove many Mennonites to rural areas with land that no one else wanted to farm. The need to establish agriculture in difficult areas led

Figure 8

to Mennonite inventions in a variety of sustainable farming techniques. Persecution also drove communities together. The biblical emphasis on land and natural metaphors seemed to work well for Mennonites who came to see "simple living" as both a practical necessity and a theological principle. Simple living included learning to be self-sufficient in making food, clothing, and shelter. As some Mennonites became wealthier, there was less emphasis on simple living. In places where persecution ended, some began to take up similar lifestyles to those around them. Today, the Anabaptist Creation Care

Network[24] affirms that creation care and simple living are still Mennonite values.[25]

Agenda for Mennonite Peacebuilding

First Nations elders taught me an important lesson when I worked for MCC Ontario as Native Concerns Coordinator from 1990 to 1992. Elders teach that every religion is a gift. To belong to a religion is to belong to a tribe. Like any tribe, there are parts that may be out of balance, but all tribes have valuable teachings accumulated and passed down through the ages. People need roots—to know where they come from. The elders also told us to learn from others, to have wings to explore. Culture and belief are not static: they grow, learn, and adapt. This wisdom is captured today in the advice to give children both "roots and wings"—roots so they know their ancestors, and wings so they can break with the past and move forward.

Mennonites have solid roots. Our legacy of peacebuilding is strong. Pacifist theology can be, and has been, translated into practical actions. Mennonites have lived out the words of Menno Simons to clothe the naked, to comfort the sorrowful, to give food to the hungry, and to shelter the destitute. Mennonites today have added to that list of faithful activities. They protest in the streets for justice, mediate between warring groups, facilitate dialogue between haves and have-nots, teach the military alternatives to war, and educate children about peace. However, Mennonites also need wings. Mennonites, especially non-ethnic Mennonites, need the freedom to transform and challenge gaps in Anabaptist theology and distortions that twist Mennonite culture away from Jesus' teachings.

Improving Mennonite peacebuilding begins with self-reflection. A two-handed approach to those with whom we disagree can move us beyond unhelpful "enemy" language. Our institutions can be set free from the requirements for ethnic Mennonite leadership so that we explore the ideology of Anabaptism, and are free to create and inspire new visions of Mennonite peacebuilding. While doing so, we will do a better job of

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[24] See www.mennocreationcare.org, accessed May 1, 2017.
[25] See Tom Wynward, *ReWilding the Way: Break Free to Follow an Untamed God* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2015).

challenging the secular white supremacy that has leached into our theological fields, damaging the seeds of hope and healing. We will listen more closely to voices on the margins of the church and society, and affirm their dignity. We will care for victims of sexual violence and tend to their needs instead of focusing only on the needs of offenders. We will model peacebuilding within Mennonite church relationships. We will practice tolerance and remember the Waterlanders' vision of a beloved community. When we find ourselves disagreeing with other Anabaptists, we will search for common ground. And we will continue to marvel at how conservative and progressive Mennonites find new ways to support environmental sustainability. Reflection and self-assessment require us to examine our strengths and weaknesses, our assets and gaps.

Lisa Schirch is North American Research Director for the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, and Senior Policy Advisor with the Alliance for Peacebuilding. She is affiliated with the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

PART II

Peacebuilding Initiative Profiles

Peacebuilding Initiative Profiles

Mennonite peacebuilding occurs in a range of formats and contexts. The authors of the ten short pieces that appear below presented and discussed aspects of their work at the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival held at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, from June 9 to 12, 2016. The editors of this special issue of The Conrad Grebel Review *invited them to write a profile that outlines particular features of a particular initiative and reflects on the challenges encountered or the lessons learned. The authors are speaking from their own experience of the project. While they have all participated in the work they describe, they do not speak in an official capacity, or on behalf of the organizations or partners involved.*
– Editors

Mittaphab (Peace) Group, Laos

As a university student studying social work, I was first introduced to peacebuilding through the *Mittaphab* (Peace) Group, sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee. This initiative began in 2006 with gathering youth from different contexts who had similar visions of peace. After the team members had developed peacebuilding skills, they expanded the project by promoting peace to secondary school students in the Laotian capital city of Vientiane, using a peacebuilding curriculum they developed together as an after-school activity. The curriculum taught students about friendship, understanding each other, and building stronger relationships among students, teachers, and volunteers. It also addressed issues that youth in Laos are now facing, including drug and alcohol use, materialism, and cultural and religious discrimination.

The key element of this initiative is the opportunity for young adults, ages 18 to 30, to learn, share experiences, and explore peacebuilding, something that is considered new in Laos. The project also provides a safe space for secondary school students and teachers to learn together when Mittaphab offers an activity in the school on the weekend, an alternative to students spending their time on entertainment or consuming social media. As well, the project assists young people in thinking about, and generating, their vision of peace, whether with their friends or family, or in life generally.

In a regular school setting, they gain knowledge only from the teacher and a required curriculum, but this is not sufficient for daily living. They need to gain other life skills and peace skills that can be valuable for their future.

Mittaphab Group has created a learning space for peace, developed peace resources for Laos, produced young peacebuilders, and helped to prevent conflict or violence especially with young adults in the school environment.

I have learned many things from implementing this project for almost a decade. One is an understanding of the concept of peace, something that obviously needs to be appreciated by me as a leader and that requires taking responsibility to accomplish peace, and promote it, among the participants. I have also learned that bringing together youth from different faiths, ethnic groups, and backgrounds is very useful. It can bring peace for them, because they have a space to share their voices, fears, beliefs, and insights, and thus can construct new understandings and peace among and between groups. To represent my learning, I came up with this poem:

The Road to Peace

The road to peace and justice is not an easy one,
and it takes a lot of wisdom, energy, resources and hard work to see peace.
Peace is not a habit for your vacation, and if you are a natural peacebuilder,
then it's harder for you know how to bring peace to the world.
Peace is not for tasting and throwing away if you do not find it delicious;
it is life for humanity and the earth.
Peace is about the soul: to learn from people and from past experiences,
connecting them to the future with love and compassion.
The road to peace is not only half way but is the full way of human life;
if you take only half, there will be more suffering and injustice,
which we have enough of already.
If you see that learning and building peace is too difficult,
then please stay miles away and do not even touch any piece of them.
If we need good roads, we will build and develop them,
and if we need peace and justice, why don't we build them?

Khamsa Homsombath is Team Leader on Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation with Mennonite Central Committee in Lao People's Democratic

Mennonite Brethren Church of India: Transforming Conflict

Peace is considered a precious gift in today's world. A society without conflicts is unusual, but legitimate conflict resolution is a practical element of a healthy society. Peacebuilding has been central to Mennonite life and identity, and offering a peace witness is a core Mennonite activity. Mennonites have gained a reputation as peacemakers that has often shaped their public identity. Since its inception in 1889, the Mennonite Brethren Church of India (MBCI) has been participating in peacebuilding in the southern state of Telangana. MBCI works to help individuals, communities, and societies transform the way they perceive and manage conflicts—a core component of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding aims to create sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of violent conflict, and by eliciting indigenous capacities for peaceful management and resolution of conflict.

MBCI Peacebuilding Initiatives

Peacebuilding is a dynamic social construct. Through various initiatives, MBCI has played a significant role in peacebuilding in Telangana State. Two of these initiatives are the M.B. Centenary Bible College and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies.

M.B. Centenary Bible College (MBCBC)
Located in Shamshabad, 18 km (11 miles) south of Hyderabad, the College developed out of various MBCI Bible training programs. The Annual General Body of MBCI, which met in December 1988[1] in view of the need of more highly educated theological leaders, decided to establish the College, which would offer a Bachelor of Theology degree, in the church's centenary year, 1989. In June 2003, all the church's theological training programs were folded into the program of MBCBC.

In order to promote peace education, MBCBC introduced a peacebuilding course entitled "Anabaptist Mennonite History and Peace Theology" at the baccalaureate level in 2003. This course explores how 16th-century Anabaptist believers recovered a Jesus-centered practice of defenceless discipleship amidst European Christendom. It also tracks the

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[1] The Governing Council of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India, Minutes of the Annual General Body Meeting, December 2, 1988.

development of a coherent Anabaptist peace theology through two centuries of struggle with established religious and civil authorities who sought to destroy this emerging early peace church.

Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies (CPCRS)
Since March 2004, MBCI has been involved in imparting peace education through this center at the MBCBC campus.[2] The main function is to teach conflict resolution in order to promote peace for leaders irrespective of religion or status, through short-term workshops and one-year diploma programs. Other programs include a community education project, adult education, workshops on anger management, and hygienic and medical camps. Important challenges in teaching conflict resolution include ethnic conflicts and caste issues in society and church, and limited resources (inadequate literature on peace and conflict resolution studies in vernacular languages, a shortage of trained teachers).

CPCRS students include teachers, lecturers, lawyers, police and military officials, evangelists, pastors, church elders, social workers, government officials, and individuals working with non-government organizations. After completing the program, students continue their respective jobs. Using their skills, they are peacefully resolving conflicts at their workplaces and in their communities.

Emmanuel Masku, a graduate and a social worker, observes that "Everyday conflicts can escalate into violence if we do not learn to solve them peacefully. Conflict resolution skills, which I learned at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies, were indeed very helpful to peacefully resolve conflicts between slum school children in Hyderabad." He adds that "Conflicts between slum school students are a normal part of growing up, but left unchecked, peer problems can interrupt class time, cause emotional stress, and derail students' learning. Moreover, conflicts among slum students can quickly become violent. However, giving my students some simple problem-solving tools—such as: identify the problems, define and discuss the problems, summarize progress, explore solutions, and implement the solutions—help school children work through peer conflicts *before* they

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[2] Dalton Reimer, "A New Centre for Peace Studies Established by The Conference of The Mennonite Brethren Church of India," Report, June 1, 2004.

interfere with academics and lead to bigger social-emotional challenges."[3]

Conflicts are part of life, and each individual as well as society have to face them. MBCI has dual responsibilities: first, to solve conflicts; and second, to proclaim the message of peace and to participate in peacebuilding programs at large. In a world ravaged by violence, it is not easy to be a Peace Church, a church dedicated to the ways of Christ's peace. These ways require much intentionality, persistence, and even sacrifice. The Bible reminds us that every Christian needs to sow in peace in order to see the fruit of righteousness, which is closely related to the principle of justice (James 3:18; Matt. 5: 9). Moreover, in this world of chaos and conflicts, we are called to be peacemakers, not peacebreakers!

Yennamalla Jayaker is Assistant Professor of History of Christianity at Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College in Shamshabad. He is also a Research Scholar at the Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture in Kottayam, Kerala, India.

Emergency Preparedness Response Teams: Jos, Nigeria

Four days before the "the world changed" on September 11, 2001, the state of "peace and tourism" in Plateau State, Nigeria, and particularly in its capital, Jos, was broken. Latent tensions between communities defined simplistically but effectively along religious lines (Christian versus Muslim) erupted into several days of violence. During this period of bloodletting and property destruction, hundreds of people were killed. The city's former mixed neighborhoods of Christians and Muslims became ghettos of people from one tradition or the other, separated by fear. Conflicts flared up both in the city and countryside in the years following, displacing many people from their homes. Gopar Tapkida, a Nigerian Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) peace worker recently returned from graduating with an MA in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University, felt overwhelmed by the task at hand.

Father Anthony Fom suffered deep personal losses in the conflict.

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[3] Interview with Emmanuel Masku, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India, August 5, 2017.

Nevertheless, he almost immediately took on a role in the Catholic Church's Justice, Development, and Peace/Caritas (JDPC) initiative, beginning the long, hard, work of finding entry points that could ground the process of rebuilding broken relationships. In the process he connected with MCC. Training programs were set up to create safe spaces for key people from both deeply affected and fearful communities to understand together the reasons for the conflict. Drawing on Gopar Tapkida's peacebuilding training and the knowledge and skills of others, including former MCC worker Yakubu Joseph, the workshops sought to imagine what rebuilding peace in Jos and Plateau State might look like.

By 2005, as the conflicts continued throughout the state, emergency relief became an important aspect of helping affected people. Deliberate thought was put into developing a relief delivery mechanism that would involve volunteers—both women and men, and Christians and Muslims—to deliver aid in a non-biased way to hurting communities. JDPC, the lead organization, drew on relationships with NGOs and Muslim organizations to form Emergency Preparedness and Response Teams (EPRTs). Support came largely from Catholic Relief Services, with some relief supplies from MCC. Eventually more than 270 carefully selected individuals formed EPRTs of educated community leaders, equally male and female, Christian and Muslim. Team members serve as early warning systems for potential flare-ups and share information with local security forces hoping to contain impending violence. They involve themselves in many other local issues, such as rural disputes between agriculturalists and cattle herders, and they have helped during election periods.

Recently, EPRT tackled conflict prevention through a peace club project for secondary schools. Conflicts will remain between Christians and Muslims unless youth are offered alternative frames for understanding the issues and resolving them. After attending training in the peace club model developed in Zambia at the African Peacebuilding Institute, Boniface Anthony, EPRT coordinator since its inception, returned energized to adapt the Zambian materials and to start a program. Schools all over Plateau State were strategically chosen to pilot the program.

Key learnings from this experience are the following:

- It was important to focus on practical responses to human

suffering in the initial stages. EPRT built up its integrity in the community by its non-biased way of delivering relief materials.

• It took great bravery and courage for the initial EPRT volunteers and leaders to come together amidst the polarizing tension and violence in Jos. The tenacious commitment to interfaith, interagency, and intergender participation made it a unique contribution, and reveals the resilience needed in peacebuilding.

• MCC's unique way of building relationships with grassroots actors made a big difference. MCC became a bonding agent by holding all the EPRT partners together. MCC achieved this because it earned the trust of Muslims and Christians by demonstrating impartiality, conveying mutual understanding, and maintaining direct partnerships with most of the organizations.

• Long-term partner relationships bring value to both the international organization and the local partner. The arc of the MCC and EPRT relationship over its twelve years has yielded concrete results, not the least of which is the web of 270 community peacebuilders spread throughout the state. While the nature of the projects changes, the stability of connections makes it possible for the local partner to trust that its international counterpart acts out of a level of local knowledge and commitment. In turn, the international partner builds its own understanding of peace practice.

• The move from emergency relief to conflict prevention (peace clubs) may appear to be a natural progression that happens in many areas of peacebuilding and development. At the same time, the many facets of EPRT's program are clearly deepened with each new initiative. Just because a new tool is added, that does not negate the value of an old skill.

Mary Lou Klassen is an adjunct lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies at

Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. Yakubu Joseph is Nigeria Country Coordinator for Mission 21, a Basel, Switzerland-based community of churches and organizations that connects people from various cultures and countries. Gopar Tapkida is the Mennonite Central Committee Representative in Zimbabwe.

Synergies towards Change in the Philippines

On Saturday morning, June 11, 2016, a panel discussion on "Mennonite Peacebuilding Approaches on the Ground: The Philippines and Grassroots Peacebuilding Efforts" took place at the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival. It created a conversation with three peacebuilders who have significant experience in the region: Myla Leguro (Program Manager, Peace and Reconciliation Program, Catholic Relief Services-Philippines), Dann Pantoja (President, PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. [PBCI]), and Wendy Kroeker (former MCC service worker in the Philippines, and current Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute facilitator).

This group of peacebuilders has intersected many times in the past decade over issues of relevant peacebuilding strategies, the role of faith in the work, and areas for change and challenge. The intent of the panel emerged as a way to struggle with foundational strategies and tools that have guided many peacebuilding efforts in the Philippines, and to ask where some of the growing edges might be for the challenges faced there. Specifically, the quest was to push at Western frameworks that have been helpful guides over the past decade and to assert insights that have emerged directly from peace work in the Philippines. The ongoing struggles of conflict due to militarization, political processes, and natural disasters have made it a significant context for examination. The panel served as a springboard for Myla and Dann (with Wendy hosting) to express the synergies of change occurring in many peace organizations and the themes that have pushed at their practice.

The three practitioners agreed, first, that peacebuilding is a "dialogue of life" and that, in the Philippine context, one does not separate one's peacebuilding efforts into the dichotomy of the professional and personal—the kind of distinction often made in the Western context. Peacebuilding in Mindanao is an everyday reality, and requires both a vigilance and a

commitment that carries into all of life.

Second, structural analysis is paramount. The field has been built on four dimensions of Conflict Transformation (CT): personal, relational, structural, and cultural. In the Philippine context, the structural dimension is crucial, an aspect often diminished within the North American application of the CT framework. Myla's peacebuilding team regularly pursue concrete ways of engaging in structural transformation in their efforts towards integrating peacebuilding processes in local governance. The focus in community peacebuilding work is not so much on the interpersonal level but on bottom-up transformation through empowerment in order to increase participation in local governance, especially in addressing peace and security issues, strengthening community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, and creating processes engaging local government actors as stakeholders for peace.

Third is the place of the spiritual. Dann has worked to build a community of colleagues at PBCI who take seriously their theology in analyzing their peacebuilding strategies. He contended that "something in our theology" builds the capacity "to do crazy things like embracing the militant outsider-other." This theology includes a view of Jesus, of the gospel, of justice, and of peace. He summed it up in one word, "Anabaptist," and stressed that we must not be militants against militant people. This has become especially poignant, given the challenges of responding to the country's current War on Drugs and the military interventions in Marawi.

Myla concurred with the need to regard the spiritual as part of peacebuilding strategies. Her team has added the spiritual dimension to the Conflict Transformation framework. The spiritual is not simply something to be considered when working with traditional communities. Secularism might be the new norm, but Christians need to take seriously the impact of their theology for peacebuilding strategies. Rituals—both old and new—are essential aspects of connecting peoples and communities during times of conflict and reconciliation. Much work is now being done in the Philippines to build people's capacities and understanding in interreligious dialogue. Dialogue skill-building is seen as essential for civil society cohesion.

Lastly, acknowledgement of complexity is required. John Paul

Lederach's "Pyramid of Actors,"[4] which distinguishes top, middle-range, and grassroots leadership levels, is a significant tool for peacebuilding in the Philippines. Its context of clear sectors makes its relevance vast. Philippine peacebuilders work hard on the links between grassroots and middle sector actors in building a strong base for activism and change. However, the panelists also realized that it needs an expansion. The relationships and connections at the grassroots level are complex. What has emerged in the Philippines is a discussion of "the triangle within the triangle." To plan appropriately, one must realize the myriad relationships and connections that exist among the grassroots sectors.

Years of peace education programming in Philippine communities has created a rich environment for analysis and strategizing. Peacebuilders educated in similar locales, and committed to a building a culture of peace, have created a network of energized communities with a strong vision. They will continue to push the edges of peacebuilding.

Wendy Kroeker is Co-Director, Canadian School of Peacebuilding, and an instructor in Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Myla Leguro is Program Manager, Peace and Reconciliation Program, Catholic Relief Services, Davao City, Philippines. Dann Pantoja is President, PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Davao City.

Peacebuilding in the Africa Great Lakes Region

The 1994 Rwanda genocide was an African problem in need of an African response. It was a complex humanitarian crisis involving thousands of refugees from Rwanda who were welcomed in both Goma in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Bukavu in the South Kivu province of the DRC; the internal displacement of Congolese families; and unresolved historical grievances between different ethnic groups in Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC, and Uganda. Dynamics of nationality,

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[4] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

gender, sexism, power differentials, colonialism, structural and systemic violence, inequalities, class, militarization, organized crime, and plundering of national resources created the need for a regional conflict transformation program using an intersectionality-informed approach.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) began a regional peacebuilding program in 1995 in Burundi and the DRC. In 1998, MCC volunteers from Eastern Congo and Burundi started a capacity-building program to support the Council of Protestant Churches of Rwanda. This training program focused on closing the gap between religion, conflict, and peace.

The key role played by the churches of Rwanda in orchestrating the killings of the innocent Tutsi and Hutus required the churches to be part of a long-term solution. The regional African churches and their partners were called upon to walk alongside the churches of Rwanda regardless of their actions. The Church of Christ in Congo in South Kivu province invited the MCC to initiate a joint peacebuilding program as a means to accompany the regional churches. This program started in 1996 and ran until 1999. It consisted of initiatives for transforming conflict, healing from trauma, humanitarian assistance, envisioning peace, restoring justice, and environment protection. After many years' absence, MCC returned to the region in 2014.

MCC used an intersectional approach in its response. This type of approach attends to the many intersecting dimensions of social identity—gender/sex, race, class, nationality, religion, sexuality, dis/ability, and age. No single identity is necessarily the key to interpreting how persons navigate and interpret their contexts, including contexts of conflict. Thinking proactively and creatively, MCC suggested to the Council of Churches and other stakeholders the creation of a non-church affiliated structure to be named The Council for Peace and Reconciliation (COPARE). Subsequently established in 1997, COPARE included stakeholders, both women and men, from these cohorts: faith-based, civil society, and business organizations; government; refugees from Rwanda and Burundi; internally displaced peoples; university, college and high school representatives; media; and others. COPARE used the intersectional approach in its peacebuilding program. Stakeholders interacted with, trusted, and learned from each other how race, ethnicity,

class, gender, age, disability and ability, nationality, citizenship, and religion create different experiences that may or may not contribute to building peace. They experienced transformation as they came together with their different identities and social locations.

The program brought together women from Rwanda, Eastern Congo, and Burundi who had suffered the consequences of war. They all participated in training in conflict transformation. From the resulting dialogue they realized a commonality of experience. The women had been traumatized. Even though their particular experiences varied, many of the symptoms were the same: inability to sleep; night terrors; and repulsion to certain smells, sounds, and tastes. Gender thus became the bridge across ethnic boundaries. The women began to talk together and help each other through their trauma.

In 1999, a Women's Symposium was held in Bukavu. Many of the women who had participated in the original training attended. They invited the military generals and politicians of all three countries to participate, and those from Eastern Congo and Rwanda accepted the invitation. During the exchange, both sides came to recognize the extent of trauma suffered by women during war and conflict. Recommendations were made for each group concerning future conversation, and for the need to establish a Women and Peace Network.

The program also looked at how nationality and religion intersect with conflict. Faith leaders from Eastern Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi were brought together to discuss the consequences of conflict within their regions. They discovered a commonality in the loss of church and school infrastructure; loss of budgets due to donor fatigue; and loss of membership as many people were displaced and became refugees. Because of the interethnic nature of the conflict, people often perceived that the church had sided with one or the other party. People in all three countries lost trust in the church leadership, who were seen as perpetrators of the conflict, having sided with "the enemy." The recommendation was to develop a peace synergy in the Great Lakes Region through pastor exchange and visitations between countries and regions.

As these and many other examples demonstrate, an intersectionally-informed analysis and approach has been a distinctive element of this Mennonite peacebuilding initiative.

Sustainability is a great challenge for peacebuilding in a region known for never-ending wars. This creates peace donor fatigue. When the media broadcast stories about conflict, then money flows to the area, but when these broadcasts stop so does the money. This makes it difficult to plan for long-lasting peace and sustainable development, and the cycles of conflict continue.

Another challenge that intersectionality work highlighted is the need to deal with perceptions of superiority and inferiority among participants, including clergy. People who came from different "levels" (high level, mid-level, grassroots level) had to find a way to connect and respect one another. In the end, they used the local metaphor "One finger cannot wash the face" to encourage connection and peace among the leadership.

Fidele Lumeya is Co-founder and Senior Researcher at Congo Ubuntu Peacebuilding Center, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and COO of the Congolese American Council for Peace and Development.

GI Rights Hotline: Expanding the Peacemaking Arena

In 1994 a group of agencies and individuals in the United States, who were providing counsel to active duty military personnel, gathered to form the GI Rights Hotline.[5] The Hotline is a free phone counseling service that anyone in the military can call if they are seeking information about military regulations or practices related to difficulties they are experiencing. While the primary initiative for the Hotline came from agencies in the peace movement with years of experience in draft counseling, today's counselors include a wide variety of people, including veterans, who are concerned about protecting the rights, health, and well-being of military personnel in the midst of a system that can be very dehumanizing.

I began participating in the Hotline as a counselor in 2001, while working as a peace educator for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. (MCC). One of my first calls came from a young soldier in Japan who had become a conscientious objector to war and was seeking a discharge based on her

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[5] For information, see www.girightshotline.org.

commitment to Buddhist principles of nonviolence. At the time I thought this type of engagement with U.S. military personnel was new and unique for Mennonites. But years later, while digging through the archives of the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO, now known as the Center on Conscience & War), I learned that work like this had actually begun fifty years earlier.

It was during the Korean War and its aftermath that U.S. soldiers whose conscientious objector applications had been denied, or those who had become conscientious objectors after enlisting, began contacting Historic Peace Church leaders at NSBRO for help. At the time there were no provisions in military regulations for conscientious objector discharges.

As early as 1950, J. Harold Sherk of the MCC Peace Section was appointed to a committee under NSBRO auspices to seek a meeting with Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall to press for the establishment of a conscientious objector discharge from the military. During the course of the war and after, NSBRO repeatedly contacted military officials regarding specific CO cases in the hope of helping them find a way out of the military.[6] It was not until a decade later, in 1962, that the U.S. military service branches adopted regulations providing an honorable discharge for conscientious objectors to war.

While the GI Rights Hotline did not spring directly from this early work, much of the initial concern was centered on assisting soldiers seeking a discharge for reasons of conscience. However, today's Hotline handles calls related to a broad range of issues. Calls may take many forms, as these examples suggest:

> • I enlisted while I was still in high school and I'm supposed to report for basic training next month. But now I've decided that I really want to go to college. Can I withdraw?

> • My daughter is in basic training and she is miserable. She is depressed, anxious, and is desperate to get out. Can she?

> • I've been home on leave and was supposed to return to my base last week. I don't want to go back. What will happen to me?

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[6] See http://civilianpublicservice.org/storycontinues/hotline/advocacy.

- I've had two deployments and have been diagnosed with PTSD. They've given me lots of drugs but it's not helping. I have suicidal thoughts.

- I no longer believe the military is right for me. I don't even want to train with my gun anymore. I wonder if I am a conscientious objector.

All of these types of calls and many more are handled by roughly twenty counselors scattered across the country. We meet annually for additional training and mutual support. It is not unusual to work with conscientious objectors for up to a year, with repeated phone calls and e-mails to review their application narrative. We may even testify at a conscientious objector's hearing to vouch for their sincerity. In some cases we continue relating as friends after a successful discharge.

The Hotline is not about stopping wars, but about supporting people who are struggling midst a large and sometimes oppressive military culture that stirs deep questions about purpose, morality, identity, and allegiance. Military personnel often carry the trauma of war deep inside their souls and face important decisions about their future. Hotline counselors help them reflect on the values they hold dear and outline potential options for them to consider. A veteran friend once told me, "If you want to be a peacemaker and you are not talking to soldiers, you are not thinking nearly big enough." The Hotline enlarges my thinking and expands the arena of peacemaking.

Titus Peachey retired from his Peace Education role at Mennonite Central Committee US in 2016. He now volunteers with local and national peace and justice organizations from his home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

PAYRA: Adult Peace Education in Bangladesh

PAYRA (meaning "dove" in Bengali) is an initiative of Mennonite Central Committee Bangladesh that has emerged from grassroots efforts to train local communities in peacebuilding and conflict transformation skills. Many of the initial efforts have been, and continue to be, coupled with multi-sector

development initiatives that inform the PAYRA approach. The specific objective is to build peacebuilding capacity by offering adult participatory Learning Sessions in the Bengali language—by Bangladeshi facilitators—to staff from other organizations with the potential to conduct grassroots activities as part of their work. Target groups include families, union council members charged with arbitrating local disputes, and, more recently, mid-level civil service workers and politicians. PAYRA has also been developing a peacebuilders network and a peace resource center.

Building upon English-based international peacebuilding institutions, PAYRA broadens the reach of adult peace education to those whose language or economic barriers prevent international travel. The approach has been to work with participants to identify concerns from the community's experience and to develop sessions accordingly—redeveloping outside learnings for needs embedded in the life, language, and context of Bangladesh. The all-Bangladeshi staff seek to act as servant facilitators, which is somewhat unique for the country, where teachers or trainers commonly mirror the colonial legacy by acting like "the boss."

Also, virtually all the current efforts in Bangladeshi peacebuilding have been primarily either top-down interventions at the upper political level, targeting specific groups such as extremists, or academic research programs. Part of what makes PAYRA unique is the focus on empowering average Bangladeshis facing daily conflict and violence with practical, accessible tools to address the multiple root causes of conflict from the bottom up. Participants have noted that the impacts they see in their own family relationships provide motivation for community-level action.

Through reaching out to other organizations, PAYRA has discovered the need to address the many socially and culturally-constructed boundary walls between emerging peacebuilders that hinder cooperation. An NGO may not feel confident or comfortable reaching out to an Imam, or vice versa. Student groups may not trust politicians, and political groups get stuck in party lines. PAYRA seeks to pass on the ideas of relationship and listening to organizational and community leaders from various political or religious perspectives in order to avoid creating further dichotomies. Staff have sought to model these ideas through engaging with participants from Madrasa teachers to rural politicians to NGO field staff. At the same

time, in building on nearly 50 years of MCC wisdom in Bangladesh, PAYRA has had to be mindful that a peacebuilding approach requires patience, transparency, humility, and an openness to its own transformation through these interactions.

Another learning that has shaped PAYRA's approach in the last couple of years is the use of culturally rich metaphors to convey new and abstract concepts in a relatively short Learning Session and to work towards worldview transformation. For example, in conversations about the interests and needs of a given conflict actor, the metaphor of a "char" (a sand island created by the sediment of a shifting river current) has emerged to visualize how we can get stuck on our own island, isolated by positions which separate us. But it also opens a discussion on what is going on under the surface, where we can not only begin to understand the ground on which others stand but may also see the possibility for common ground in shared values, or even shared needs and interests.

A further example is the "conflict tree" metaphor, which opens conversation about healthy roots needing to be nourished in order for a family or community to produce peaceful fruit. Similarly, "justice flowing like a river" is a metaphor that has helped refocus narrow, passive perceptions of justice, suggesting that true justice has the power to wash away the old and to bring forth new life and energy.

Poetic metaphors are very familiar to Bangladeshis, and in fact the many revered Bangladeshi poets, such as Rabindranath Tagore (d. 1941) and Fakir Lalon Shah (d. 1890), create an undercurrent of Bangladeshi identity that supersedes much of the religious difference. People of all the major faiths know and sing the same songs from these thinkers, and PAYRA staff have noticed that opening space in Learning Sessions for these songs, and encouraging creative metaphors to emerge, solidifies the learning and brings participants together into more meaningful and transformative relationships.

Kerry Saner-Harvey is the Indigenous Neighbours Program Coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and was Peace Sector Coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Bangladesh.

Colombian Congregations: Healing, Restoring, and Peacebuilding

The Church Coordination for Psychosocial Action (CEAS—an acronym for the name in Spanish) began as an initiative of the Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ churches of Colombia. The intention was to provide a training resource for Anabaptist churches and organizations wishing to respond to the spiritual, psychological, and social needs of internal refugees fleeing from the war in their home communities. When people fled to the large cities, some came to our churches. They came with all the strengths and resources that life had given them, but also with a load of sadness, loss of community, questions about how a loving God could have allowed this to happen to them, a longing for justice, and the fear—often justified—that the threat they were fleeing would resurface in the city.

We observed that quite independently of any training CEAS might offer local congregations on how to provide pastoral and social care, refugees began to attend church services, became involved in church activities, and exercised new strength to carry on. They were able to forgive but also to work actively for a just peace, and they found new meaning and life in Jesus Christ. This led us to embark on an interview project with those living in forced displacement and actively participating in an Anabaptist church. The interviews aimed to understand the qualities of church life that allowed people to experience healing (spiritual, psychological, social, and even physical) in the midst of enormous loss and trauma, and while having to start life in a new setting and, in many ways, a new culture.

Understanding that healing is necessary for both individuals and society to move forward after a long period of armed conflict, we structured the interviews around a model of healing presented by psychiatrist Judith Herman[7] and adapted by Carolyn Yoder[8] for peacebuilding contexts. Herman describes how violence and trauma affect people's sense of safety and control over their lives, their trust in basic relationships and social networks, and their sense of meaning, value, and purpose. Conversely, the resilience and agency of people are aided by safety, order, and the ability to act with efficacy; by reconnecting with relationships and social networks; and by reaffirming meaning, recognition, and valuing themselves. In peacebuilding contexts,

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[7] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
[8] Carolyn Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005).

healing opens up possibilities for reconciliation and re-engaging society—necessary steps for people to build anew.

Our analysis of the interviews demonstrates that people are able to experience healing in contexts of forced displacement when given the opportunity to be part of an open and accepting community. Many churches in Colombia are those face-to-face communities that have served as refuge for victims of the armed conflict. People's responses illustrated the amazing simplicity of ways in which the local congregation can be an avenue for the healing Spirit of God, and illustrated how the congregation becomes the body through which people encounter Christ. What is more, although the interviews did not inquire into the impact on pre-existing church life, informal observation indicated that the experience was transformative for church members as well.

In interpreting our findings, we found a biblical lens to be very helpful. In the biblical narrative, we see the anguish and longing for God when the Israelites are driven from their home (Lamentations 3, Psalms 79, 137) and when Job has lost everything (Job 2, 19); faith and resilience (Psalms 23, 91); hope in the prophets' messages (Micah 4:1-4); and Jesus' coming to incarnate God's love (John 1:1-14, Ephesians 2:17-19), and to charge the church to carry on the work of love and reconciliation (Ephesians 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Being a welcoming and healing community is intrinsic to the nature and calling of the church. We recognized the value of putting our findings in a form that would enable us to share them with the churches, and identified thirteen characteristics that can be cultivated and strengthened among all members:

1. welcoming

2. providing a safe space

3. expressing sincere interest in the other

4. recognizing and giving opportunity for people to express their pain

5. providing biblical orientation for understanding and responding to what has happened

6. helping to recognize God's presence in difficult circumstances of life

7. encouraging service in behalf of others

8. offering opportunity for people to orient and find strength for their lives

9. inviting people to consider their values

10. accompanying acts of courage

11. encouraging people to consider their life plan

12. instilling courage and hope, and

13. fostering engagement, relationships and a sense of community.

We organized the characteristics into a simple study guide, one page per characteristic, in which we present an excerpt of a refugee's testimony, a related biblical text, and an activity to deepen the learning experience. We then published the guide and shared it with local congregations.

What we have found is that using the guide has made possible personal healing and community strengthening, not only for refugees but for many others for whom experiencing their own sorrow and strength is equally healing and inspiring. The implication is that this material is helping churches address profound needs common to our human condition while enhancing their ability to receive people whose life experience has brought particular pain, and, by doing so, helping them find hope and vision for fullness of life.

Nathan Toews serves with Mennonite Central Committee in Bolivia. Paul Stucky is Coordinator of the Church Coordination for Psychosocial Action (CEAS) in Bogota, Colombia.

Constructing the Path of Reconciliation in Colombia

As a majority population in Colombia, and historically victims as well as caregivers and agents of life, women in Colombia have developed their own

forms of resistance to violence and have made important advances for gender equality. Women of faith, in particular, are a spiritual and psychosocial support for promoting values aligned with the construction of peace and reconciliation, having the capacity to offer safe spaces for encounter, for acknowledgment of suffering, and for fostering nonviolent responses to conflict. The cooperation of women of different faith backgrounds is a clear example of a reconciling power capable of generating profound transformation in Colombian society, which is so wounded by war.

GemPaz is an association of women of faith, begun in 2007 with the purpose of reflecting together on Biblical texts, praying together and practicing peacemaking, dialogue, and reconciliation in various regions of the country. As of 2017, we number about 250 women: pastors and religious leaders, defenders of human rights, community leaders, and others with interdisciplinary backgrounds. Together we learn, reflect, encourage each other, and otherwise join forces to build peace in Colombia, which has experienced a conflict of more than 50 years' duration but is now on the threshold of a peace accord with one of the guerilla groups.

We see that women still carry much pain and suffering, and we expect that healing this pain will take time. It will be necessary to walk alongside these women, and important that their pain and suffering be honored, that confidence in the State and its agencies be restored, and that collective agreements be re-established to guarantee human rights and to guard against a return to the past.

For two years now, we have been implementing a contextual Bible study method (seeing, judging, acting) that has helped women to identify themselves with the text and thus to open themselves to forgiveness and reconciliation as a natural rather than a forced process. These encounters enable them to understand their local contexts, to analyze the realities of their regions and territories, to embark on a communal reading of the Bible in workshops, and, by means of exercises exploring their emotions and personal stories, to give new meaning to their pain and to process the suffering caused by the war.

Currently, I am part of the steering committee of GemPaz in Colombia. As a therapist, I bring a perspective of reconciliation in supporting groups of women to enhance their capacity to understand their own pain and to

accompany others in their communities seeking to overcome the trauma caused by the war. These spaces, called "circles of women," are safe spaces for women—victims and now ex-combatants of the guerilla groups—to come to know each other and to show solidarity with one another. This is one way in which we build peace in Colombia and show that churches can become circles of peace and reconciliation where all are included. We must continue to enable ourselves in various ways—as women and members of these churches—to help restore the dignity of both victims and aggressors; to strengthen trust in the communities by actions contributing to restoration of the victims and reconstruction of the social fabric; and to establish the role of churches as places of peace that encourage dialogue and the practical expression of reconciliation.

I understand reconciliation to be a journey, a process that requires creating spaces of encounter for the various actors—antagonists and adversaries, victims and victimizers. These spaces generate conditions for conversations that are otherwise improbable, almost impossible, where victims are placed at the center, where those responsible make reparation for damages caused, and where the truth is recognized as one and the same by all parties, something indispensable to re-establishing trust. In Colombia our greatest desire is that our communities are never violated again, but we recognize that we are a country of historically great economic inequality, with wealth and land concentrated in the hands of a very small group. We want to contribute to equality and to the overcoming of poverty and illiteracy, still encountered in high numbers. For this to occur, reconciliation also requires us to revisit our own prejudices and to overcome social, cultural, and political boundaries. If it is to support a lasting peace, reconciliation also implies a change to our own preconceptions.

Once the peace accords with the FARC have been signed, our work as a civil society living in a historic moment, a unique moment, will be to uphold the peace by our participation and articulation, in such a way as to make peaceful coexistence and nonviolent conflict resolution possible. We believe that the outcomes will flow from the factors already described above:

- As victims of armed conflict and custodians of life, women have developed their own forms of resistance and have brought about significant advances in terms of gender equality, advances

that require continual consolidating and reinforcing in order to guarantee the empowerment of women.

• The participation of women of faith—by encouraging dialogue and the practical exercise of reconciliation—reaffirms the church's place as a space for the construction of peace, despite the current reality of division.

• The cooperation of women of different faith backgrounds clearly exemplifies the reconciling power that can generate profound transformation in a society wounded by war.

• The diverse capacities for, and forms of, encounter and celebration proper to women support the restoration of the dignity of victims of the armed conflict, the inclusion of ex-combatants, and the strengthening of spaces for articulating and consolidating trust in our communities.

• Women of faith provide spiritual support for promoting values that create the conditions for peace and reconciliation; they have the capacity to offer safe spaces in which differences are respected and nonviolent responses to conflict are fostered.

Mónica Velásquez Vargas, a psychologist and therapist, is a member of the steering committee of GemPaz and of the pastoral team at the Brethren in Christ church in Tierra Linda, Colombia.

Translated from Spanish by Rene Baergen, Pastor of Hispanic Ministries, First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario.

Interreligious Peacebuilding in Indonesia

In 2010, Duta Wacana Christian University, an interdenominational institution in Yogyakarta, owned by twelve Indonesian synods (two of which are Mennonite), was asked by the United Board to carry out a project entitled Interreligious Understanding and Peacebuilding. The United Board is an international agency for the empowerment of Christian higher education in Asia.

We designed this project for lecturers from Indonesia's Christian higher education institutions with the intention that they would develop interreligious peacebuilding programs on their own campuses. In a nation with the largest number of Muslims in the world, interreligious peacebuilding is of great importance, because social conflicts in Indonesia are always the combination of very complex factors. They are often rooted in the violence of the past, provoked by misguided hermeneutic understandings of religious texts, and sustained by unjust social structures, not to mention the misuse of media networks that go beyond national boundaries. The cultural complexities and people's different mentalities are often used as a tool to further exacerbate conflicts and violence; the noble values of local cultures are often twisted in the wrong direction. Efforts to empower people to transform social conflicts into peaceful relationships are thus crucial, and include initiatives to educate and empower younger generations to engage in interreligious peacebuilding.

Higher education in Indonesia can play a very strategic role in such efforts. It can empower community through the development of critical discourses and the transformation of an intercultural paradigm. It can also provide space and resources for scholars to gain critical insights and deep intercultural experiences, as well as to give birth to reliable networks of college-based peacemakers. We believe Indonesian Christian colleges can serve as active ministers of reconciliation because not only is the number of students seeking higher education growing rapidly, as Indonesia becomes a middle-class economy, but youth are pulled by both radical extremists and groups seeking tolerance and peacebuilding.

The project focused on two main areas. First, it aimed to empower Christian higher education institutions so that they could integrate interreligious peacebuilding in all parts of academic life, including teaching, research, and community service. This was achieved by developing participants' skills through a series of five annual workshops where they learned and explored various ideas on how interreligious peacebuilding could be supported in higher education institutions. Participants were young educators from 17 Christian higher education institutions (11 universities and 6 seminaries) who were officially representing their institutions. They were asked to make a five-year commitment to attend, and to be actively

involved in annual workshops which started in 2011. They also had to be less than 40 years old when they attended the first workshop.

Before coming to each workshop, participants were asked to write their ideas according to their respective cluster (teaching, research, or community service). These ideas were then presented in the workshop for discussion and enrichment. Workshops also included field visits to holy sites and educational institutions representing Indonesia's other faiths (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as well as Indigenous beliefs).

Secondly, the project aimed to establish two types of higher education networks for interreligious peacebuilding: one for Christian educators, and one reaching beyond our campuses to embrace fellow peacebuilders in other religiously oriented institutions, including the state Islamic university system.

We hoped that through this process the participants would gain knowledge and skills in interreligious peacebuilding that they will develop further on their respective campuses. In June 2017, the end of the five-year program was marked by the publication of a book documenting the activity. There was also an official launch of the Indonesia Peace Network (www.indonesiapeacenetwork.org), a network of Christian higher education institutions and interested individual lecturers in these institutions to work together for the enhancement of interreligious peacebuilding, during the annual national congress of the Association of Christian Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia. In that congress, member universities of the Association officially integrated the Indonesia Peace Network into their portfolio.

Equally important is what is happening on the campuses of the participants. Some of the Christian universities and seminaries are now developing their own programs through establishing peace study centers and organizing interreligious peacebuilding activities integrated into mandatory community service programs. Some are offering courses, creating teaching content for integration into existing courses, and doing research on such topics as the role of architecture and the use of local wisdom in interreligious peacebuilding, and launching student peace clubs, to mention just a few.

Much has been accomplished over five years, but many challenges remain. The biggest challenge overall is to get real support from both the

leadership and the academic culture of the Christian universities. Almost all these institutions support the idea of interreligious peacebuilding cognitively and passionately, but not all are ready to implement the idea concretely on their respective campuses, because of obstacles such as gaps in financial or administrative capacity. As a minority, Christians, including Mennonites, have to bear witness to interreligious peacebuilding persistently and consistently with full commitment. As when the Israelites journeyed through the desert to the promised land, some are further along, some are behind. That is the hard fact of any new idea. The most important thing in any kind of journey is to keep moving forward.

Paulus Widjaja is Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.