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Book Reviews

Foreword

The articles and book reviews in this issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review* illustrate the range of subjects that can align with the journal's mandate to "advance thoughtful, sustained discussions of theology, peace, society, and culture from broadly-based Anabaptist/Mennonite perspectives." The editors welcome submissions of articles or reflections from various disciplines in keeping with this mandate, as well as brief responses to published articles. We especially draw attention to—and welcome submissions related to—the Calls for Papers appearing in this issue.

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When Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Confronting Ethical Challenges in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

Reina C. Neufeldt

In this article, I explore how moral values can play a problematic role in peacebuilding. My argument is that careful attention to values is necessary for peacebuilding to be transformative. I take "peacebuilding" to be an umbrella term referring to efforts undertaken in settings of conflict to transform relationships and structures to promote a just peace.[1] It includes work variously labelled as conflict transformation, conflict management, conflict resolution, peacemaking, and reconciliation. This work may be undertaken by actors who are either external to, or local to, the conflict setting.

I start by examining what "failure" means in peacebuilding through stories and definitions. I then explain why I began to look at moral values in peacebuilding to account for failure. Moral values, as philosopher Isaiah Berlin defines them, refer to "ideas about what it is good to be and do—about what sort of life, what sort of character, what sort of actions, what state of being it is desirable to aspire to."[2] People use moral values as a foundation for making judgments. I outline four ways the use and misuse of moral values can contribute to failure in that process. When I employ the term "ethics," it refers to critically assessing moral values and morality—appraising the "ideas of what it is good to be and do." I then offer ways to rethink how we engage with moral values, in order to be part of constructive peacebuilding and to understand the implications for contemporary reconciliation initiatives. The latter is especially important, given current efforts to come to terms with the legacies and effects of colonialism on Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada, which is also known as part of Turtle Island.

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[1] Definition drawn from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United Institute of Peace, 1997).

[2] Joshua Cherniss and Henry Hardy, "Isaiah Berlin," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/berlin/notes.html, accessed Oct. 5, 2017.

A Grounding in Practice: Two Stories

Peacebuilding has good aims. It seeks peace through transformed relationships and structures; it seeks peace with justice. People who engage in peacebuilding are purposefully stepping into conflict settings in order to try to make things better. This is surely a good end to pursue. But as the saying goes, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions," or, in its older variant, "Hell is paved with good intentions." Do these adages relate to peacebuilding? Can peacebuilding efforts, so well-intended and aiming at such a worthy goal, be part of this proverbial road? Two short stories may help answer these questions. While these stories and others in this article are from people's lived experiences, I will use pseudonyms and general terms about locations and details to protect the anonymity of those who shared them.

Story One

A well-intentioned, bright, and thoughtful young couple were working in Southeast Asia for a non-governmental organization (NGO) in a country recovering from years of war. Their mandate was to listen to the community and support its efforts to improve and develop, and they were keen to do good work. A mushroom farmer approached a partner organization for a loan of a small amount of money and for some training. The couple decided that their NGO would support the partner organization to provide both the loan and support for training. The farmer began to prosper. Everyone was feeling good about this investment, and the farmer easily paid back the loan. But then he left, abandoning his wife, his family, and his community. He took his profits and moved away. His wife and family were left in poverty and shame, and his already struggling community was worse off than before, as it now needed to support his family as well. These were not exactly the hoped-for effects.

Story Two

Matt was a young US Peace Corps volunteer serving in Central America in the 1980s. He was working with a community displaced from their homes by government soldiers. The internally displaced persons (IDP) camp members were suspected of associating with the guerillas. There were food shortages in the camp, which was located next to a farm. Matt decided to approach the

farmer, whose fields bordered the camp, to ask if the camp could use some of the land for gardening to grow food. Matt saw the farmer on a bus and made his request. The farmer agreed, and Matt was delighted. Unfortunately, the young volunteer failed to realize that the bus was not a private space: the farmer was disappeared, and Matt was brought in for questioning by the military. It was a devastating outcome, nowhere near the good that he hoped to do.

In these stories the failure is not about good intentions that lead to inaction, but rather about good intentions that lead to action in complex situations that proved problematic. What could a peacebuilder have done? While one cannot predict the vagaries of human behavior, I argue that courses of action such as occurred in these stories are informed by moral values that contribute significantly to failure when neglected or imposed. If we as peacebuilders do not examine these values, then we will not see how they focus our attention and actions in settings such as those described in the above stories. Good intentions, it turns out, can play a significant role in failure.

Defining Failure and Success
To what does "failure" refer? I could argue that a failure to "improve things" is a failure for peacebuilding, a point made by Mary Anderson and Lara Olson in a multi-organizational effort to examine the effects of peace practice. They note that "so long as people continue to suffer the consequences of unresolved conflicts, there is urgency for everyone to do better."[3] While I agree with this assessment and concur that we must do better in peacebuilding, I am most concerned about the failures that occur when our interventions make things worse. If we are going to "make things better," first we need to stop making things worse. In the two preceding stories, interveners unintentionally made things worse.

As individuals and organizations working in and on conflict, peacebuilders can indeed make things worse, which results in harm to people. My focus is on those who were originally external to the conflict setting and

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[3] Mary B. Anderson and Lara Olson, "Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners" (Cambridge, MA: Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, 2003), 10.

then entered it as peacebuilders. In such situations, we peacebuilders can be responsible for the loss of life. We can escalate conflict, undermine local solidarities, and promise things that do not happen and thus increase people's cynicism. We can divert resources and contribute to structural injustice, we can impose our values, and we can use people to advance our own ends or to stabilize the conflict. These are real possibilities, and they have all occurred at various times and places.[4]

On the converse side, what is "success" in peacebuilding? I suggest it occurs when decisions and actions reflect careful, open thinking that embodies important virtues and responds to context and power inequities; when decisions and actions reflect relationships of care and responsiveness within the conflict; and when actions and their effects are constitutive of collective flourishing.

Looking at Moral Values to Understand Failure

My initial interest in ethics in conflict intervention began in the 1990s when friends and I got together to talk about deficiencies we saw in our rapidly expanding field. In that post-Cold War decade, peacebuilding grew quickly as it aligned with state-building efforts undertaken by UN organizations and supported by Canada and other countries.[5] Peacebuilding was becoming increasingly specialized in technical areas, such as building post-war democratic institutions and legal or economic structures. This development changed the nature of the peacebuilding enterprise and attracted a much greater range of people to the field. I and my colleagues Lisa Schirch and Larissa Fast were puzzled that elements we regarded as important in peacebuilding—for example, modeling values like participatory engagement—were not self-evident to everyone.

Modeling values appeared clear in Mennonite and Quaker efforts. These efforts include initiatives in the 1980s and '90s at Conrad Grebel University College with the Mennonite Central Committee and Project

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[4] See Reina Neufeldt*, Ethics for Peacebuilders: A Practical Guide* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016): chapter 7, "Doing Good Well: Talking about the Real Issues."

[5] In some ways this is marked by a foundational document at the United Nations by then-Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "A/47/277 - S/24111 an Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping" (New York: United Nations, 1992).

Ploughshares. However, it was not widely adopted in the new, expanding literature and field practices. Many people thought that as long as you got the outcome you wanted, it did not matter how you did it or what others thought about it. This gap in thinking led us to publish a joint article in an attempt to put our thoughts on paper.[6] The shift in the field also led to a robust literature in International Relations that examined the peacebuilding aligned with state-building and a "liberal peace," and offered a normative critique of why international state-led actors were interested in building peaceful states.[7]

In 2007, I stepped back from peacebuilding fieldwork. During a fellowship at the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame, I ruminated on past moments in the field when I had felt uneasy in the pit of my stomach but proceeded anyway. Did we do the right thing? Why did I think that was a good thing to do? I began thinking more carefully about moral values and ethics. I also began to hear people judging things as morally good and right in their work, but using language that did not name these qualities as values. In 2009 Tim Murithi, a South African scholar and practitioner, voiced a similar concern, arguing that the lack of assessment of the ethical dimensions contributes to peacebuilding's limited success.[8] There was a systematic gap in the field with respect to identifying, weighing, and discussing values and their effects on decisions and actions. It was not that people were generally amoral or immoral, but that at times their judgments of what was (or is) good, and the values undergirding these judgments, themselves contributed to failure. This was true of both external and local peacebuilders. How does this happen? How do well-motivated, smart people who want to be moral and ethical fail? Below I outline four ways that moral values can contribute to failure in peacebuilding.

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[6] Larissa A. Fast, Reina C. Neufeldt, and Lisa Schirch, "Toward Ethically Grounded Conflict Interventions: Reevaluating Challenges in the 21st Century," *International Negotiation* 7, no. 2 (2002): 185-207.

[7] For example, see Oliver P. Richmond, "The Dilemmas of Subcontracting the Liberal Peace," ed. Oliver P. Richmond and Henry F. Carey, *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of NGO Peacebuilding* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005); Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, eds., *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (New York: Zed Books, 2011); Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richmond, "The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763-83.

[8] Tim Murithi, *The Ethics of Peacebuilding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009), 11.

How Moral Values Contribute to Failure in Peacebuilding

1. Moral character and organizational culture

Possessing and building moral character is integral to many religious traditions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. Humans build their moral character and embody virtues or traits that are excellent to possess, such as courage or humility. Classical Greek thinking also stressed virtues and included an emphasis on *phronesis*, the practical wisdom gained from experience and education that enables one to see what is morally salient in a situation. Personal moral character matters. Personal moral failures—such as those occurring when peacebuilders or peacekeepers engage in abuse—are important to stop. Here I recall the dilemma of Brother Adriano, who had become the de facto head of a large camp of internally displaced persons in Timor Leste in the mid-2000s. He was afraid to tell the authorities that the peacekeepers stationed at the front gates of the camp—who were there to protect the camp from external attacks—were apparently preying on young women in the camp, inviting them into their armored vehicle for sexual favors. Brother Adriano feared the UN would pull the security detail if he complained, and that would make the situation worse for everyone. The individual moral failings of the sentries made a bad situation worse.

Personal moral failings typically occur within communities, organizations, and systems that affect personal choices. The sentries were likely working in an organizational culture that permitted, or at least turned a blind eye to, sexual abuse—a problem that UN peacekeeping operations are working hard to address. However, it is not only UN peacekeepers who fail morally. Peacebuilders who work for NGOs and local peacebuilding organizations fail too. I failed at times because I felt that I had to do certain things to support an organizational norm. Personal moral character can contribute to failure if peacebuilders do not attend to *phronesis* and only act on particular virtues without discernment, and if their organizations are not nurturing positive ethical cultures.

2. Moral and ethical by definition

A less obvious problem is that we peacebuilders can think we are moral and ethical just by definition, and that this is good enough. In this line of

thinking, our assessment of morality stops with our intentions: we made a value-based choice, and now here we are engaging in action with no need to question further. However, insidious effects emerge from what Séverine Autesserre calls the "here to help" narrative.[9] Autesserre carefully researched international peacebuilding efforts in Congo, Burundi, Cyprus, South Sudan, Israel and Palestine, and Timor Leste. Her findings are sobering. She argues that how international actors live and act in everyday work environments produces significant problems that make them counterproductive, ineffective, and inefficient.[10] One part of her analysis draws attention to the undermining role that a sense of moral superiority plays. Foreigners enter into a conflict for "moral reasons"—"to help the host country and its citizens"—and in so doing claim the moral high ground, as captured in the saying "The hand that gives is always higher than the hand that receives."[11]

There are two important dimensions of the "here to help" narrative. First, it separates interveners and expatriates into one "club" that is different from the local community. Second, expatriates start to suggest that local communities lack capacity; are backwards, incompetent, or corrupt; are only self-interested and doing this work for professional advancement or pay; and are not altruistic like the foreigners. Power inequalities further reinforce these divisions. The problem is that moral and ethical deliberations begin and end with the decision to intervene, and the everyday practices and attitudes evade scrutiny. Ask about international peacebuilders and you will hear disturbing stories about how the international "club" acts.[12] Autesserre contends that it is not surprising in such contexts that local people frequently contest, resist, or reject international initiatives supposedly designed to help.[13] While her focus is on international peacebuilders, her insights can also apply to peacebuilders working within their own home settings.

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[9] Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014).

[10] Ibid., 13.

[11] Ibid., 195.

[12] See also Mary B. Anderson, "Can My Good Intentions Make Things Worse? Lessons for Peacebuilding from the Field of International Humanitarian Aid," in *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*, ed. John Paul Lederach and Janice Moomaw Jenner (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

[13] Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*, 13.

3. The problem of thinking we know what is right

A third way moral values contribute to failure occurs when peacebuilders think they know what is right and act upon their assumptions without deliberation. This can happen individually or in groups; the personal variant of this failure is commonly called dogmatism. Anthony Weston regards dogmatism as one of three common substitutes or counterfeits for ethical thinking (the other two are relativism and rationalization).[14] Dogmatists believe they already know the answer to a moral question before it is raised. They cut off open and careful consideration of moral issues because they know what is right regardless of the specific case or circumstances. Any arguments are then simply attacks on another person or position, irrespective of what else might be morally salient.

There are dogmatists in peacebuilding, just as in other fields. For example, some practitioners are so committed to nonviolence that they do not engage with difficult counter-arguments about the use of force. Nonviolence is one of the values that I defended dogmatically early in my career. During an intense debate, a concerned Serbian colleague queried me: "Why are you people so committed to nonviolence?" He thought my dogmatic commitment blinded me. Having lived through war and dogmatisms run amok, he had insights that I did not yet possess. When we agree with the values that dogmatists hold, we want to broadcast them (maybe retweet them), and when we disagree we think they should be silenced (close their Twitter accounts). In both situations, merely clinging to values without careful, open-ended thinking means giving answers before even grasping the questions.

The second version of this problem manifests itself in faulty group decision-making processes, which social psychologist Irving Janis memorably named "groupthink."[15] Groupthink occurs when group pressures lead to a deterioration of "mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment."[16] Various conditions can produce this dynamic, but what

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[14] Anthony Weston, *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013); Anthony Weston, *A Practical Companion to Ethics*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011).

[15] Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982/1972).

[16] Ibid., 9.

generally happens is that team members value unanimous agreement and group cohesiveness over open and reasoned debate or problem-solving. The group ignores contradictory information, becomes overconfident, believes itself inherently moral, and stereotypes outside opinions and groups. The resulting decisions are irrational and problematic. Groupthink can become especially problematic if head office personnel are insulated from field complexities and make decisions under pressure. As individuals and groups, the conviction that "we know what is right" is blinding.

4. A single moral value in settings marked by division
A fourth way that moral values contribute to failure occurs when peacebuilders are guided by only one moral value in a conflict setting. They are trying to do good but see only one way to do so, without being consciously aware of their "my way or the highway" orientation. Another story may help illustrate this difficulty.

     In the early 2000s, I worked as a peacebuilding technical advisor for a Catholic relief and development organization. My position focused on fostering high-quality peacebuilding programs, either stand-alone or integrated with the organization's emergency relief and development work. On one occasion, I was rushed off to provide technical input to a delegation of Burundians in the United States on a three-week training and planning visit. It was part of a unique collaboration between the Catholic Bishops conferences of Burundi and the US and my organization. The aim was to support the Burundian Church in developing a vision for, and a capacity to build, peace in their conflict-riven state. A long history of support already characterized this relationship, and the Burundian Church had been active in in-country negotiations and dialogue. My organization was eager to continue to support the Burundian Church, as part of a longer-term response to the 1993 violence and its aftermath—in 1993, roughly 300,000 civilians were killed, half a million were displaced, and a similar number fled to neighboring countries.

     The workshop I was called in to join was designed to foreground spiritual reflection, working with the Church as a spiritual community, training in trauma and conflict transformation, envisioning peace and reconciliation, and developing a three-year action plan. The workshop

planners had spent most of their time working on the spiritual reflection aspect, and then on the components that involved exploring trauma, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding. They had not spent much time thinking about how to develop the action plan. A problem arose when people in my organization feared the workshop would not produce a good, technically sound outcome. My organization needed additional financial resources, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) was an interested partner. This meant there was pressure to ensure the project met peacebuilding technical standards. We found ourselves with a clash of values in the midst of the workshop, something I now see only with hindsight. At the time, I viewed my work as necessary to improve the technical quality of the proposal that the group was supposed to develop. Technical quality was assumed to be a value-free good that the organizers and Burundian contingent should want. However, conflict arose, and the organizers, and to some degree the workshop participants, were nonplussed as project planning techniques were belatedly injected.

We muddled through, and the group eventually produced a project idea that was developed, funded, and had significant reach in Burundi. However, the negative effect was that we had demonstrated valuing efficiency and ends—understood as "total number reached"—over the Burundian and Catholic Church values that stress solidarity with the disadvantaged and subsidiarity (the notion that those closest to a problem take the lead in resolving it). This episode reinforced questions about the ability of those in the US to walk alongside the Burundian church. The conflict would have been better understood if we had examined our contested values. We could have then been more productive in brainstorming options that valued solidarity, subsidiarity, spirituality, and care as moral goods not subsumable under the value of our pre-identified ends.

Stepping back to look more broadly, values are part of the reality in all conflicts, particularly deeply-rooted conflicts. People fight to defend themselves against injustice and oppression or for justice and freedom. Operating out of a narrow moral value—one that we peacebuilders may not even recognize—contributes to failure because we are unable to listen and to hear what values are important to other stakeholders. In this inability, we can contribute to difference, distrust, and schisms.

Thus far, I have diagnosed the problems of moral values at some length because these matters receive little attention either in the literature or in field practice. Yet, to paraphrase Aristotle, the whole point of thinking about ethics is not just to know what is good but to become good. How can peacebuilders use moral values in a transformative way? I will try to answer that question by offering three responses to the problems noted above.

Using Moral Values in a Transformative Way

The following responses have implications for peacebuilding in general. I also explore the implications specifically for efforts in Canada to act on recommendations of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, given its importance and the call to action at universities.

1. Hear moral values

All the areas of failure explored above involved inadequate attention to moral values. The first response, then, is to do better at *hearing* moral values; that is, to listen for the foundational ideas (things considered important or worthy) upon which judgments are made. This is a skill worth practicing and can involve textual analysis. The first example below uses text from the United Nations Burundi Configuration, a sub-group of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and the second a Government of Canada document.

The Burundi Configuration is composed of ambassadors representing such nations as Australia, Bangladesh, and Switzerland, as well as UN officials and representatives of regional and international bodies such as the African Union and the World Bank. Their 2015 statement is an aspirational document intended to send operational signals to Burundian leaders regarding the then upcoming elections. It was written in a period when the President of Burundi had decided to stand for elections a third time, shortly after a failed coup attempt and during a time of heightened tensions and escalating violence. The President's decision was highly controversial and argued to be against the 2005 constitution. Three paragraphs of the 2015 statement read as follows:

> The PBC Burundi Configuration highlights the importance of dialogue and reconciliation among all Burundians to address the root causes of the current crisis. It stresses the need to find

a lasting political solution that ensures Burundi's hard gained progress in peace consolidation and peacebuilding.

The PBC Burundi Configuration calls on all Burundians to urgently establish, through open dialogue and a spirit of compromise, the necessary conditions for the holding of free, transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful elections.

. . .

The PBC Burundi Configuration will continue to follow the situation closely and stands ready to help Burundi at this critical juncture of its journey towards sustainable peace and development.[17]

This excerpt contains a number of important claims about what is commonly agreed upon as good and right by the Burundian Configuration members—a particular set of actors, speaking into Burundi.

In paragraph one, nonviolent means of dispute settlement are valued as right and good in the phrase "dialogue and reconciliation," and again in paragraph two with the call for "open dialogue and a spirit of compromise." A negotiated political comprise is thought to be the right technical response. This implies an underlying value, namely political order and stability, held dear by the Burundi Configuration and by the UN. A necessary condition for political order is carefully specified in paragraph two: it entails "the holding of free, transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful elections." In this sentence, several values are espoused, including (again) nonviolence, participatory democracy, and transparency. These are understood as good and right means. As well, a statement about good ends is embedded in the final phrase of the third paragraph above: "sustainable peace and development." There is also a strong statement about the wrong thing to do, namely to undermine or lose the "hard gained progress in peace consolidation and peacebuilding." Finally, there is an assertion that it is right and good for this set of international actors to speak into Burundian politics and to expect that

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[17] From the "Statement by the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission," New York, May 15, 2015, available at: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2015-05-15/statement-burundi-configuration-un-peacebuilding.

Burundi will respond. In sum, nonviolent dispute settlement, political order and stability, participatory democracy, transparency, sustainable peace, and development are among the main moral values presented in the document (there may be others).

One way to identify moral values is to listen to the reasons or justifications that actors give for why it is important to act and for what they judge to be right action. Another way is to analyze how a problem is framed. For example, in introducing the context of Burundi I emphasized problematic political dynamics. The same thing occurs in the letter itself. This framing of the problem prioritizes political order as the most important moral good. While this is understandable, given the actors and context in which they are speaking, it is a limited moral claim. It does not speak to other key components of what it means for Burundians to flourish, including personal well-being, recovering from trauma, relational healing, and nurturing community. All of these were important for the Burundi contingent who participated in the workshop. When peacebuilders listen for moral values, we must listen not only to the strongest voices—such as those that speak from the UN or a Presidential palace, which are easy to hear—but also those that are quiet, disadvantaged, or marginal.

What are the implications of hearing and listening for moral values in the journey towards Indigenous-settler reconciliation in Canada? Here too, hearing moral values may be the first step to getting out of a "my way or the highway" orientation. In *Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Tzvetan Todorov investigates what made it possible for European explorers to engage in mass extermination and conquest.[18] He names values as forming one of three axes of alterity or "otherness" to help solve this puzzle. Values justified conquest for Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortés in Mesoamerica; values were at the center of Ginés de Sepúlveda's arguments for why Spaniards had a right and duty to impose their Christian-informed understanding of good on others in a hierarchically-organized world of superiority and inferiority.[19] Even the counter-arguments of the Dominican bishop of Chiapas, Bartolomé de Las Casas, against Sepúlveda at a public

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[18] Tzvetan Todorov, *Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (Norman, OK: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

[19] Ibid., 151-53.

debate held in Valladolid, Spain in 1550, assumed that the Spanish possessed the highest moral values.[20]

There is an identification of "*my* values" as "*the* values" that are then to be imposed. "Yet is there not already a violence in the conviction that one possesses the truth oneself," Todorov asks, "whereas this is not the case for others, and that one must furthermore impose that truth on others?"[21] This question reflects the challenge noted above with state-led and UN pronouncements on what is good in peacebuilding and reconciliation.[22]

This problem of assuming our values are *the* values was apparent in establishing the Indian Residential Schools in Canada and the imposition of certain educational and cultural values. More recently, there is a shift in some perspectives, which is evident in certain statements; there are good words being used, many centering on values. For example, consider the preamble of a statement titled "Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples, issued by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada," from the Department of Justice. It begins:

> The Government of Canada is committed to achieving reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through a renewed, nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit-Crown relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership as the foundation for transformative change.[23]

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[20] Ibid., 151-56.

[21] Ibid., 168.

[22] I use Todorov here as part of the interrogation of actions occurring within the context of settler colonialism in Canada because his focus is on conquest in the Americas. While his insights are relevant for peacebuilding and can be used to examine the relations occurring within peacebuilding elsewhere, not all initiatives occur within this same context and the analysis requires more attention than I can give it here. For examples of others who have explored some of this terrain, see Roland Paris, "International Peacebuilding and the 'Mission Civilisatrice,'" *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002): 637-56; Meera Sabaratnam, "History Repeating? Colonial, Socialist and Liberal Statebuilding in Mozambique," in *Routledge Handbook of International Statebuilding*, ed. David Chandler and Timothy D. Sisk (London: Routledge, 2013).

[23] Government of Canada Department of Justice, "Principles Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples," Government of Canada, Issued July 14, 2017, available at http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html.

Recognition, rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership are all valued as moral goods. These values are regularly named in recent government statements and documents, and sound like worthy ones to pursue. However, a close textual reading indicates other values are also invoked in this document. The analysis here focuses only on Principle 2 of ten principles. It reads:

> 2. The Government of Canada recognizes that reconciliation is a fundamental purpose of section 35 of the **Constitution Act, 1982**
>
> Reconciliation is an ongoing process through which Indigenous peoples and the Crown work cooperatively to establish and maintain a mutually respectful framework for living together, with a view to fostering strong, healthy, and sustainable Indigenous nations within a strong Canada. As we build a new future, reconciliation requires recognition of rights and that we all acknowledge the wrongs of the past, know our true history, and work together to implement Indigenous rights.
>
> This transformative process involves reconciling the pre-existence of Indigenous peoples and their rights and the assertion of sovereignty of the Crown, including inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction. Reconciliation, based on recognition, will require hard work, changes in perspectives and actions, and compromise and good faith, by all. [24]

There are many values here. Respect and mutuality are evident, as are a valuing of history and acknowledgment of wrongs. There is a valuing of rights and of law and legal procedures, which embraces part of the current legal system as a good (the Constitution, Indigenous rights, other rights, jurisdiction, title). There is also a valuing of the Crown—the sovereign nation-state—as a basic good, with Indigenous sovereign nations existing within a "strong Canada." The first sentence prioritizes a political order, similar to the Burundi statement. The end is envisioned as Indigenous nations within Canada, both co-existing and strong—although "strong"

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[24] Ibid.

is not defined. There is an interesting allusion to the virtues of hard work, adaptability, and compromise.

The statement also values the idea that issues in tension will be reconciled. Paragraph two suggests even contested land titles. Values hidden behind this reference include those of individual interests and economic production, both of which are in tension with collective stewardship, multigenerational values, and land care. This tension is already noticeable in resource-related conflicts. While I am not pointing out anything new here, I find it interesting that what is valued is land title itself, not the values behind it that are also in tension. This suggests that Canadians generally do not yet know what all the necessary values are for engaging in reconciliation. This lack of knowledge reinforces the need to listen for, and to hear, how people frame the problem and judge the potential solutions.

2. Attend to plurality

When I speak of moral values, I am advocating an approach in line with Isaiah Berlin's value pluralism. Rather than argue for one moral theory as is common in philosophy, Berlin contends that there are many genuine values to consider in ethical deliberation. This approach means that value clashes are inevitable: "we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute."[25] Mercy can clash with justice, quality of life can clash with order, and so forth. There is no a priori ordering in which one good is better than another. Thus what is needed is openness, careful thinking, and deliberation. This entails exploring facts and context, hearing a broad set of voices, and engaging with rationality, emotionality, and spirituality as part of moral discernment.

To help listen for moral values and attend to plurality, I will introduce Rick Hill, a Tuscarora Knowledge Keeper, artist, museum curator, and leader at the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Six Nations Polytechnic, Six Nations of the Grand River, in Brantford, Ontario. He describes traditional Haudenosaunee knowledge as valuing a good mind but also other attributes such as compassion. Hill speaks of the importance of valuing soft words, thankfulness, and performing one's duties as part of creation. While I may not understand the full meaning and implications of these teachings, I am

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[25] Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 213-14.

beginning to hear values that address some of the deficits and challenges we face today. Valuing soft words, for example, would be a welcome change in the face of fast-paced, bombastic, and social media-enhanced dogmatism.

There are Haudenosaunee values that resonate with Mennonite values such as humility and performing one's duties as part of a larger community. In Hill's account, I hear overlapping and mutually enhancing moral values, and I sense the potential for conversations about values to help build bridges between communities in the Haldimand Tract, upon which Conrad Grebel University College is located.[26] Hearing and then attending to plural moral values offers an opportunity to clarify, deepen, and enrich our own values and our subsequent decisions, actions, and judgments as part of a journey towards reconciliation.

3. Practice creative problem-solving when values conflict

At the heart of creative problem-solving is "both-and" thinking.[27] Generally, people do not look to negotiate values; as a colleague once quipped, you cannot decide that "I will be unjust only on Tuesdays." Many of us hold certain moral values and imperatives as sacred, such as "love thy neighbor." These values help define who we are, what our character is, and what our commitments are. However, religious teachings and moral principles operate at a general level, and peacebuilders need to discern how they apply in a given situation. There is space to think creatively and non-dichotomously.

One recent example of creative problem-solving comes from a situation in a youth-community peacebuilding project. Located in an urban area, this project involved NGO workers being pressured by an informal local leader not to proceed with the work. There was both physical intimidation and verbal threats. Angry that a contract had not been awarded to his organization, the informal leader demanded that all work be stopped. Here a peacebuilding effort seemed to be exacerbating conflict

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[26] The Haldimand Tract refers to land extending six miles on either side of the Grand River (mouth to source) that was granted in perpetuity by the British to the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) in 1784. For details see http://www.sixnations.ca/LandsResources/HaldProc.htm.

[27] See Anthony Weston, *Creative Problem-Solving in Ethics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007). I was pleasantly surprised that conflict resolution techniques for creative problem-solving show up in the ethics literature.

in the neighborhood. Valuing its open and transparent bidding process, the NGO took the complaint seriously. The NGO did not want to be intimidated or pay a bribe, and also valued the lives and security of the staff and the community. What could have been seen as a narrow dilemma around corruption or security was reframed: NGO staff members asked, What all is going on here? By exploring the situation more fully, they saw that another value was more important to the local leader, namely the value of respect. The NGO's response had to combine demonstrating respect to the leader with resisting his demands.

The implication of such an example for us in Canada is that we must be ready to think creatively in working towards reconciliation, and to establish processes to help do this when values conflict. This is already happening. For example, in the Laird area of Saskatchewan, farmers and members of a landless band, the Young Chippewayan, have been working for three decades to develop creative responses to a land conflict. Their efforts are captured beautifully in a short film called *Reserve 107*.[28] Looking at the broader picture, in the government document noted above there is a strong commitment to state-level processes, legal frameworks, and an emphasis on rights. I wonder if we are moving towards a legal and increasingly technical response to reconciliation in Canada, and if we grasp what this means and its unintentional effects.

One implication might be that it limits our ability to identify and discuss values in tension, and to engage in creative problem-solving. For instance, when we try to get into the history of a place, such as the Haldimand Tract in Ontario, it can be the researchers who know the most who must be careful of what they say because of court proceedings. Restorative justice advocates have found that legal processes can limit the degree to which moral values are fully heard, as well as the degree to which creative problem-solving can take place. How will this affect people's ability to engage with one another?

A second implication might be that our everyday practices and attitudes remain unscrutinized, and that we settlers leave the problem-solving to others elsewhere. We advocate or respond when asked, but otherwise we do not think about how our lifestyles, where we eat, how we view people and the world, how we talk, and what we do on "our land" affects, or is affected by,

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[28] Available for viewing online at https://www.reserve107thefilm.com/.

Indigenous peoples and values. Perhaps the efforts by universities and faith groups to respond to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will prove otherwise. However, I cannot help but wonder, given the experiences of many well-intended peacebuilders who were "here to help" but acted in harmful ways, that our good intentions for reconciliation may have us looking elsewhere and not at ourselves.

Analyzing moral values—and the ways that these values not only focus our attention and actions but also contribute to failure—is crucial if peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts are to be transformative. Whether called peacebuilders or not, working at home or abroad, as internationals or locals, the challenge is to hear moral values, to understand their importance, to attend to their plurality, and to respond in creative ways that help constitute flourishing.[29]

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Exploring the Timbre of Mennonite Radio in Manitoba:
A Case Study of *The Gospel Light Hour* and *The Abundant Life*

David Balzer

On February 11, 1923, the Sunday service of Carmichael Presbyterian Church hit the airwaves in Regina, Saskatchewan over local radio station CKCK.[1] This first documented Sunday radio service in Canada heralded a remarkable era of religious radio broadcasting from the 1920s into the 1960s. Into the myriad religious programs filling the airwaves in those decades would come the Mennonite voice, not to be left silent in the din of proclamations and music. The earliest known Mennonite radio broadcasts in Canada aired in 1940. Harold Scheidel and his Nightingale Chorus in Kitchener, Ontario offered up mostly musical renditions, while H.S. Rempel in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan produced *Morning Devotions,* a fifteen-minute program that first aired on station CFQC in October 1940. Rempel's program was a project of the Mennonite Brethren (MB) city mission.[2]

In this essay I explore the timbre of an emerging Mennonite voice through two English-language radio programs that originated in Manitoba: *The Gospel Light Hour*, sponsored by the MB community, and *The Abundant Life*, produced by the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba (CMM).[3] My analysis focuses on the early years of these programs and the leadership of their respective producers, John M. Schmidt and Frank H. Epp. From the 1940s to the 1960s, many local Mennonite-connected radio projects were developed across Canada. The July 1952 issue of *Mennonite Life* cites no fewer than nine Mennonite radio programs airing across western

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[1] Mark G. McGowan, "Air Wars: Radio Regulation, Sectarianism and Religious Broadcasting in Canada, 1922–1938," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (2008): 8.

[2] Ted D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970: A People Transformed*, vol. 3 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1996), 352-53.

[3] I use the denominational title current during the era I am investigating. CMM was largely, though not entirely, made up of General Conference Mennonite Church congregations; see Gerhardt Ens and Sam Steiner, "Mennonite Church Manitoba," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* [hereafter *GAMEO*], 2010, gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite_Church_Manitoba, accessed May 25, 2018.

Canada.[4] The 1955 *Konferenz-Jugendblatt* of the MB community identifies ten denominationally connected programs spanning every province from British Columbia to Ontario.[5] But the two Manitoba programs were uniquely endorsed on several denominational levels and distributed nationally, signaling their particular significance in the Mennonite radio landscape in Canada.

Ample historical accounts document the presence of *The Gospel Light Hour* and *The Abundant Life*,[6] but few, if any, have investigated them from a rhetorical perspective.[7] Using a qualitative textual content analysis, I want to listen in on a particular moment in Mennonite broadcasting history in order to discern the "intentions, attitudes and emotions" of each program's producer.[8] In her analysis of Mennonite communication during World War I Susan Schultz Huxman observes that rhetorical choice "cannot be accurately evaluated by critics without taking into account the ideological commitments

[4] J.G. Rempel, "Mennonites on the Air in Western Canada," *Mennonite Life* 7, no. 3 (July 1952): 125-27, ml.bethelks.edu/store/ml/files/1952jul.pdf, accessed May 1, 2016.

[5] John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1975), 320. See also a listing of radio activity across Canada in Peter Penner, *No Longer at Arm's Length: Mennonite Brethren Church Planting in Canada* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1987), 47.

[6] Anna Epp Ens, *In Search of Unity: Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1996), 101-2, 141-46; Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt, *Seeking Places of Peace: A Global Mennonite History* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2012), 277-82; William Neufeld, *From Faith to Faith: The History of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Church* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1989), 143-47; Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church,* 320-22.

[7] Rhetorical analysis is defined in Niranjala Weerakkody, *Research Methods for Media and Communication*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), 146, 272; see also Ellen Hijmans, "The Logic of Qualitative Media Content Analysis: A Typology," *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research* 21, no. 1 (1996): 93-95. A robust exemplar of this type of analysis is found in Susan Schultz Huxman, "Mennonite Rhetoric in World War I: A Case Study in the Conflict between Ideological Commitments and Rhetorical Choices," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 16, no. 1 (March 1993): 41-53; Hubert R. Pellman, *Mennonite Broadcasts, the First 25 Years* (Harrisonburg, VA: Mennonite Broadcasts Inc., 1979) offers a rhetorical analysis of the Virginia-based *Mennonite Hour* but does not include Canadian programming.

[8] This approach is explained in Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 122.

of its rhetors."[9] My own approach to contextualizing the Mennonite radio programs falls within the investigative semiotic inquiry tradition.[10] As with Paul Saurette and Shane Gunster's analysis of talk radio, my intent is "*not to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of every aspect of the program[s]*" but rather to "identify a number of core rhetorical elements in the discourse."[11]

In conducting this study, I explore the underlying dispositions guiding the producers' decisions. What can be discerned about the timbre—the character and tone—of the Mennonite voice emerging through radio? I argue that the two programs shared a rhetoric of conversion but diverged in their emphasis on social transformation. In April 1952 John Thiessen, then Executive Secretary of the US General Conference Board of Missions and Charities, editorialized about the burgeoning radio activity across the US and eastern Canada: "[W]e are now waking up, and realize that we can speak; and that we ought to speak."[12] While oriented to the US, Thiessen's comments also capture the sentiments of at least two Manitoba program producers in the 1950s and '60s.

Beginnings of Two National Radio Programs

On February 23, 1947, two Mennonite Brethren Bible College students, Henry Brucks and Henry Poetker, along with musicians, introduced a half-hour program called *The Light and Life Hour* on Winnipeg radio station CKRC.[13] The program was soon renamed *The Gospel Light Hour* and in 1954 officially became part of the work of the Manitoba MB Conference.

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[9] Schultz Huxman, "Mennonite Rhetoric in World War I," 42.

[10] Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 23.

[11] Paul Saurette and Shane Gunster, "Ears Wide Shut: Epistemological Populism, Argutainment and Canadian Conservative Talk Radio," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 44, no. 1 (2011): 199.

[12] John Thiessen, "What of Mennonite Broadcasting?" *Mennonite Life* 7, no. 3 (July 1952): 128.

[13] Neufeld, *From Faith to Faith*, 144–45; "The Gospel Light Hour History," n.d., Vol. 276, File 1 BC260.1, History of MB Communications, Square One World Media (formerly Family Life Network, Mennonite Brethren Communications, and Gospel Light Hour) Series. Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies [hereafter CMBS], Winnipeg. Henry Brucks explains the name change in the *Gospel Light Hour 15th Anniversary Broadcast, 1962*, CD, Gospel Light Hour. Square One World Media Archives, Winnipeg. For a detailed history of beginnings, see John M. Schmidt, *The Lord's Donkey: The Autobiography of John M. Schmidt* (Winnipeg: Windflower Communications, 2001).

John M. Schmidt was the producer from 1950 to 1963. The program aired continuously from 1947 to 1976, eventually expanding to stations across Manitoba into western Canada and globally through shortwave on HCJB based in Quito, Ecuador.[14]

By 1955 "there were radio programs in every province with a Mennonite Brethren presence"[15] but only *The Gospel Light Hour* achieved a leading role on a national level. Schmidt's personal correspondence attests to this status. On November 13, 1960 John Thiessen wrote from Coaldale, Alberta: "Having heard about your program and the success thereof, I have been advised to ask you about various hints, helps and aids that might add to the work of our radio ministry. I have been asked to take over the directory work and I feel rather lost in this field."[16] Another letter in that year came from producers in Yarrow, British Columbia, who asked for recommendations about recording equipment.[17] Schmidt responded to both inquiries with gracious and ample suggestions. The national scope of *Gospel Light Hour* is further evidenced by a 1966 recommendation made by the MB Canadian Conference to integrate it as a "Canada-wide program."[18] Although this recommendation was not formally adopted, it nonetheless substantiates the program's prominence.

Ten years after the Mennonite Brethren launched a radio ministry, the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba entered the field. On January 2, 1957 the CMM Executive and Radio committees met to deliberate extending a half-time position to Frank H. Epp to be director of their radio interests.[19]

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[14] The program began airing on CFAM in 1957; see Neufeld, *From Faith to Faith*, 145; see also Harold S. Bender and Diane Zimmerman Umble, "Broadcasting, Radio and Television," *GAMEO*, February 2012, gameo.org/index.php?title=Broadcasting,_Radio_and_Television, accessed April 3, 2018.

[15] Wally Kroeker, "Mennonite Brethren Broadcasting," in *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874–2002: An Informal History*, ed. Paul Toews and Kevin Enns-Rempel (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2002), 92.

[16] Personal letter from John Thiessen to John M. Schmidt, November 13, 1960, Vol. 277, File 15 BC260.2.2 Director's Correspondence and Reports 1960-1962. Square One World Media Series, CMBS, Winnipeg.

[17] Personal letter from H.P. Neufeldt to John M. Schmidt, November 3, 1960, Vol. 277, File 15 BC260.2.2 Director's Correspondence and Reports 1960-1962, ibid.

[18] Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren*, 321.

[19] "Joint meeting of the Conference Executive and the Radio Committee, January 2, 1957, CMBC, Tuxedo," Vol. 1596, File 1 Radio committee minutes, correspondence. 1957–

Two weeks later Epp accepted—and inaugurated an unprecedented era of radio production in this segment of the Mennonite community.[20] Within his first year he developed three programs, one of which was the half-hour *Abundant Life*. While initially offered a one-year appointment, he would stay on as director until 1959 and as primary speaker through 1963.[21] The program began airing on CFAM Altona, Manitoba in March 1957.[22] By 1961 *Abundant Life* was airing in all four western provinces.[23] Helen L. Epp's analysis of letters received from listeners in British Columbia to Ontario records "3,108 pieces of mail having been received during this time [1958-1963]; 2,617 from Mennonites and 1,491 from non-Mennonites."[24] A November 1961 report from an "unbiased firm" indicates a listenership across Canada of 15,200 homes tuning in to six stations.[25] In January 1962 the Canadian Board of Missions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada approved a motion that *Abundant Life* become a national weekly radio outreach.[26] Thus *Gospel Light Hour* and *Abundant Life*, both originating

1960, Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba-Mennonite Radio Mission/Faith and Life Communications Series [hereafter CMM-MRM/FLC Series], Mennonite Heritage Archives [hereafter MHA], Winnipeg.

[20] Letter from Frank H. Epp in German to Reverend David Schulz, Vorsitzender, Manitobaer Mennoniten Konferenz, January 19, 1957, Vol. 1596, File 1 Radio committee minutes, correspondence – 1957–1960, CMM-MRM/FLC Series, MHA, Winnipeg. This Mennonite conference was reorganized and constituted on October 28, 1947. For details and the groups that joined, see Epp Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 92.

[21] Adolf Ens, "Epp, Frank H. (1929–1986)," *GAMEO*, 1990, gameo.org/index.php?title=Epp,_Frank_H._(1929-1986)&oldid=128504, accessed May 1, 2016.

[22] Helen L. Epp, "A Source Analysis of Letters Received in Response to The Abundant Life 1958–1963," Hist Mss 1.26, PF CCT MC Helen L. Epp, 1964, Frank H. Epp fonds, Mennonite Archives of Ontario [hereafter MAO], Waterloo.

[23] Epp Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 142-43, charts all the Mennonite Radio Mission programs aired from 1957–1995; see also Epp, "A Source Analysis of Letters" for details of when the program was placed on various stations.

[24] Helen L. Epp, "A Source Analysis of Letters." This research was submitted to Frank H. Epp, her husband, as an assignment in a Mass Communication course he was teaching in spring 1964.

[25] "Report of the Radio Committee to the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, November 10 & 11, 1961 at Crystal City, Manitoba," Hist Mss1.26, PF MRM, Minutes and Reports, 1959–1963, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[26] "Canadian Mennonite Radio Committee, Minutes, January 25, 1963," File 2 Radio Committee – 1960–1966, Series 5: Board of Missions, Conference of Mennonites in Canada

in Winnipeg, achieved national presence and affirmation within their first decade of operation.[27]

Rhetoric of Conversion

In conducting a textual analysis of more than 240 radio broadcast scripts of *Gospel Light Hour* and *Abundant Life*, I concluded that the dominant rhetoric of both programs from 1950 to 1963, while Schmidt and Epp were producers, was one of conversion. In an analysis of the relationship between Christianity and mass media in America, Quentin Schultze argues that

> Protestants created a powerful rhetoric of conversion that shapes practically every excursion into religious broadcasting. Protestants have long imagined mass-media technologies as powerful tools for transforming culture, building churches, and teaching society moral lessons.… This rhetoric was an ode to persuasion or, to put it more religiously, an aria to the power of symbols to foster social progress as well as to save souls.[28]

This rhetoric has functioned vocationally as "a calling to build media organizations that would attract, engage, and convert people to faith."[29] Evidence for this rhetoric of conversion is found both in the two producers' personal faith experiences and in each program's mandate and content.

Born in Russia in 1918, John M. Schmidt emigrated to Canada with his parents and grew up on the family farm in Coaldale, Alberta.[30] His memoir recounts how one Sunday evening at age 17 he went to the schoolhouse for Bible study because his father invited him to drive their new Studebaker car,

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fonds, MAO, Waterloo; see also Bender and Zimmerman Umble, "Broadcasting, Radio and Television."

[27] Leo Driedger, "Post-War Canadian Mennonites: From Rural to Urban Dominance," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 6, no. 6 (1988): 70-88, offers a compelling sociological analysis of Winnipeg as a center of influence. By 1961 Winnipeg was the biggest center of Mennonites in Canada and became home to the national conference offices of the two largest Mennonite groups in Canada in 1960 (Mennonite Brethren) and 1961 (Conference of Mennonites).

[28] Quentin J. Schultze, *Christianity and the Mass Media in America: Toward a Democratic Accommodation* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State Univ. Press, 2003), 11-12, 14.

[29] Ibid., 10.

[30] "Rev. John M. Schmidt," Rev. John M. Schmidt Obituary, July 12, 2008, passages. winnipegfreepress.com/passage-details/id-137962/SCHMIDT_JOHN.

a rare occurrence.[31] After a discussion of Christ's Second Coming, Schmidt explains that "the Holy Spirit dealt with me in a very powerful way and showed me my lost condition and where it would lead to."[32] He lingered after the Bible study, assuming someone would realize he wanted to talk about his personal salvation. When the men at the front promptly began a committee meeting, he almost left—but then turned back and interrupted them with "I want to get saved tonight."[33] Their meeting came to an abrupt end. "I received a deep consciousness of forgiveness," reports Schmidt, "[and] this blessed assurance of salvation has stayed with me all my life."[34]

Frank H. Epp, born in Manitoba in 1929, recounts two conversion experiences in an autobiography he wrote in 1952.[35] The first experience at age 14 was "practically meaningless" in its effect.[36] After the family moved to British Columbia, Epp was baptized and subsequently became a church member in 1947. "It was at this time that I was deeply convicted of sin, and it was only after a new, genuine conversion experience and a return to faith in Christ that I began to gain victory over my old nature."[37] At the end of the autobiography he gives readers a sense of his calling: "I believe that I am living in a growing measure the abundant life. I look forward to a field of activity ministering to the social and spiritual needs of mankind."[38]

Epp offers a systematic articulation of his convictions in "A Personal Credo" submitted to Bethel College in 1956.[39] In discussing the plight of the individual, he places a high priority on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ

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[31] John M. Schmidt, "My Personal Conversion – J.M. Schmidt," n.d., Vol. 1330, File 7 Memoir Pages, John M. Schmidt fonds, CMBS, Winnipeg. A more detailed account is Schmidt, *The Lord's Donkey,* 20-22.

[32] Schmidt, "My Personal Conversion."

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Frank H. Epp, "Autobiography: An assignment presented to Rev. D. Janzen, Canadian Mennonite Bible College May 1952," Hist Mss 1.26, PF CC – Christian Family, 1952, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[36] Ibid., 7.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 14.

[39] Frank H. Epp, "My Mission in Life in the Light of My Christian Faith: A Personal Credo presented to the Dept. of Bible, Bethel College February 1956," Hist Mss 1.26.3, PF CC – Basic Christian Convictions (Credo), 1956, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

and points to exercising free will as vital to salvation.

> As man fell into sin through an act of his will, he can only be redeemed from sin by an act of his free will. God's regenerative energy made available in Christ cannot work in man, until man chooses God to work in him.… Faith is not a mere intellectual assent or a mystical feeling. It is an act of the will, a deliberate choice to return once more to God for his redemption and forgiveness.[40]

The result of this faith in God through Christ is a new life—"an eternal life, and abundant life, a meaningful life."[41] Epp comes to this conclusion:

> Having realized the plight and hopeless condition of individual man without God in my own life and having witnessed to it in numerous other lives, I regard it as my mission in life to be dedicated to the proclamation of the message of salvation, as the message of hope and purpose for individual men everywhere.[42]

I suggest that Schmidt and Epp both lived with a clear awareness of their own conversion experience and named that experience as central to their life's vocation as they engaged in broadcasting.

Alongside this personal sensibility around conversion, a rhetoric of conversion is evident in each program's founding mandate. Executive committee minutes from *Gospel Light Hour*'s first year of operation state that the broadcast's aim was "to reach the many people—saved and unsaved, shut-ins, and those in isolated districts, with the clear Gospel concerning Jesus Christ and the way of salvation."[43] In a listener's letter of May 8, 1947, just months after the program began, co-founder Henry Poetker wrote that "It is our prayer that God will bless the broadcast as you listen to it and above all that sinners might find their Saviour."[44] Poetker described himself

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[40] Ibid., 8.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 9.
[43] "Gospel Light Hour Executive – Minutes: 1947–1948," n.d., Vol. 276, File 2 BC260.2.1, Square One World Media Series, CMBS, Winnipeg. Co-founder Henry Brucks reiterated this aim in his historical account during the 15th-anniversary broadcast on February 18, 1962 in Winnipeg.
[44] Letter dated May 8, 1947, from Henry Poetker to a listener, Vol. 277, File 11 BC260.2.2

as merely "a starter" in the project, as he was with the program for only a few months before leaving for a lifetime of overseas mission work in India. "We realized, if we were going to share the Gospel 'out there,' why wouldn't we do it here?"[45] Early speakers, including Rev. P.R. Toews, Henry Born, and subsequently John Schmidt, maintained this singular focus. A 1962 report written while Schmidt was producer stated that since its inception "this program has been frankly evangelistic in tone, its primary aim being to reach the unsaved, who are unlikely, unwilling, or unable to hear the Gospel of salvation in regular church services."[46] The vision of *Gospel Light Hour* was unwavering.

A rhetoric of conversion pervaded the founding mandate of the CMM's radio interests. As early as 1949, the missions committee of the conference had begun exploring possibilities for radio broadcasting in Manitoba.[47] Soon after, a concurrent interest emerged in the conference's Manitoba Youth Organization. The conversations occurred in the context of itinerant ministry and home missions. When *Abundant Life* eventually made it onto the air in 1957, it was the Youth Organization that paid for airtime on Winnipeg's CKY.[48] Listener responses in a youth publication include one from an orderly who heard the program played in hospital rooms by "non-Mennonites," and another "from a young convert" who was concerned about their parents' eternal destiny.[49] Perhaps the clearest articulation of the program's mandate came from Frank Epp at a 1957 meeting of CMM's newly established Radio Committee. He had just accepted the role of Radio Director for the conference. In an addendum to the agenda he outlines a lengthy series of organizational and philosophical concerns about the radio project. This is how he sees its primary goal:

> The message of our radio work should be evangelical, purely

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Director's Correspondence and Reports, 1947–1956, Square One World Media Series, CMBS, Winnipeg.

[45] Henry Poetker, interview with author, June 3, 2001.

[46] "Ministry Report 1962," Vol. 276, File 1 BC260.1 The Gospel Light Hour History 1961, Square One World Media Series, CMBS, Winnipeg.

[47] Epp Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 101.

[48] "MYO Bulletin," 1958, Hist_Mss_1.26.2, 88, Religion DMG CoM Manitoba Mennonite Conference, 1958–1966, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[49] Ibid.

biblical, simple and clear; and in no circumstance should there be a compromise with a cheap Christendom. The foundation of our faith, including nonresistance and our commitment to discipleship and nonconformity to this world should come to full realization. The Gospel should also have something to say to the problems of our time.[50]

In a program review survey sent to ministers and church workers in October 1959, the cover letter reads, "The Mennonite Radio Mission and also Brother Epp are not interested in just airing another program, but our desire is to help Christians grow in their Christian faith and to lead sinners to Christ."[51] An item in the survey asks, "Are non-believers made aware of their situation? Are they shown the way of salvation, does it truly share the Way, the Truth, and the Life?"[52]

Informed by their founding mandates, the contents of both programs reverberated with an evangelistic vision. The lyrics of the opening theme music of *Gospel Light Hour*, a hymn written by Maud Frazer Jackson, point to the broadcast's overriding content:

> 'Tis a true and faithful saying,
> Jesus died for sinful men;
> Though we've told the story often,
> We must tell it o'er again.
> *Refrain*: Oh, glad and glorious Gospel!
> With joy we now proclaim
> A full and free Salvation,
> Through faith in Jesus' name![53]

A radio message that first aired on March 22, 1953 and again on

[50] Frank H. Epp, "Einige Gedanken über Unsere Radio Arbeit, February 11, 1957," Vol. 1596, File 1 Radio committee minutes, correspondence – 1957–1960, Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba Executive Committee Series, MHA, Winnipeg; translated by the author.

[51] Survey cover letter sent to leaders across Canada, signed by J.K. Klassen, Director of Mennonite Radio Mission, October 19, 1959, Hist Mss 1.26, PF MRM Survey 1960s, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[52] Ibid.

[53] *Gospel Light Hour 15th Anniversary Broadcast, 1962*, CD, Square One World Media Archives, Winnipeg.

December 30, 1962 epitomizes the preaching of John Schmidt during his 13-year leadership. In an exposition of 2 Kings 17:32-34, Schmidt opens this way:

> The devil is a great clown, he can imitate most everything and everyone! For Christ, he sets up an anti-christ. If there is a true church, he sets up a world church to copy it. For a gospel, he produces false cults by the dozen. He substitutes mental assent for heart faith. He mimics 'assurance' with presumption, and imitates repentance, with a little emotional remorse.… Listen dear friend, God doesn't care how religious you might be outwardly, for unless you have sincerely repented and forsaken your sins, you are not one of his. Accept [*sic*] ye repent, you shall likewise perish.[54]

After illustrating the deception of the times through indulging in alcohol, selling the body, and following Mammon, he closes with "Open your heart even now and Christ will come in, let Jesus come into your heart."[55] Radio scripts specifically categorized under "Salvation" appear in all the years of Schmidt's tenure as speaker and director of *The Gospel Light Hour*. All employ a similar language, including a call to repentance and an invitation to receive Christ. Common phrases include "come now for there is mercy," "call upon Him," and "may your sin-burdened heart find its rest in Christ."[56] Other scripts thematically categorized under "Soul," "Assurance," "Revival," "Regeneration," and "Love" extend salvation and conversion as the primary intent of the program.[57]

The Abundant Life similarly employed a rhetoric of conversion that drove its content. A common program opening was "*The Abundant Life* is a broadcast of Christian inspiration and challenge designed to bring

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[54] John M. Schmidt, "Promiscuous Religion," March 22, 1953, Vol. 1248, File 32 Salvation. – ca. 1950–1963, John M. Schmidt fonds, CMBS, Winnipeg.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] A total of 120 radio scripts across various categories was assessed. Of the 37 in the "Salvation" category, 22 specifically indicate *Gospel Light Hour*, and a few are marked as *Evening Devotions*, a concurrent program Schmidt produced beginning in spring 1957. While many of the scripts may have been from *Gospel Light Hour*, my argument draws only on scripts specifically indicating *Gospel Light Hour*.

Christian healing and salvation to the minds and souls of men and women everywhere."[58] An analysis of scripts from 1957 to 1963 reveals an explicit, ongoing invitation for listeners to give allegiance to Jesus Christ and to find salvation. A direct invitation to turn to God through Christ was particularly characteristic of Epp's earlier years of leadership. Out of 60 radio talks from September 1958 to December 1959, at least 26 extend a direct appeal of this nature:

> My friend, if you today are experiencing the anguish of heart and soul, the remorse of a life that is bankrupt, this is the good news we have for you: God paid your debt: he pardons your guilt; he gives you a new start; he makes you a new creature.[59]

In a September 1958 program entitled "A Living or a Life: Today Christ offers not a living, but a life," Epp opens with this:

> In our time we have many surpluses. But we also have some shortages. Our biggest shortage at the moment is a strong belief in almighty God. Many people today talk and live as if there were no personal God. If you are one of these, or if you are tempted to join them, then this message is for you.[60]

In keeping with *Abundant Life*'s dual focus on leading sinners to Christ and helping Christians grow in faith, topics throughout the years also included matters of discipleship. This is particularly true of talks from 1960-61, which have a daily living and political focus. However, Epp persisted in his unreserved espousal of salvation through Christ and re-emphasized it in 1962-63. In a September 1962 talk entitled "The Grace of God Covers It All,"

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[58] Frank H. Epp, "Healing for the Brokenhearted, December 1961," Hist Mss 1.26, PF MRM Script, 1960s, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[59] Frank H. Epp, "Your Sins Are Forgiven, February 1959," in *The Dynamics of a Strong Life: And 214 Other Radio Talks Given on The Abundant Life 1958–1963* (Ontario: Frank H. Epp, 1975), radio talk 20. Content analysis of radio talks included a topical assessment of titles and a close reading of the closing of 120 scripts. Closings were investigated to identify direct calls to action, including emphases such as "make Him Saviour," "repent/yield/turn to Him," "disobedience/sin," "judgment," "commit lives to Him," "decide/choose Jesus Christ," and "Christ/God is calling."

[60] Frank H. Epp, "A Living or a Life, September 1958 Sermon Pamphlet," Abundant Life Sermons, Vol. 753, File 1 1958–September, CMM-MRM/FLC, MHA, Winnipeg.

he asserts that

> You can present your gallery of great men: Winston Churchill,
> Harold S. Bender, H.H. Ewert, William Lyon Mackenzie
> King, George Washington, or J.M. Pauls. There is none whose
> achievements merit salvation. A man is not justified by his
> works, he is damned by his works. Only grace can save him.[61]

The references to prominent Mennonite leaders such as Harold S.
Bender would not have been lost on many listeners. Several months later,
in a compelling exposé of political dynamics of the day, Epp reasserts his
conviction:

> The first ingredient of our prescription for peace is the salvation
> of the individual.… There will be no peace among men until
> there is peace within man. There will not be peace within
> man until man is at peace with God. Man must be reconciled
> to God through Jesus Christ and then be reconciled to his
> brethren through Jesus Christ. Man must experience the love
> of God before this love of God can be exemplified in human
> relationships.[62]

Religious and Social Contexts

The presence of a rhetoric of conversion in these two Mennonite radio
programs is not surprising. Communication theorist Heidi Campbell argues
that faith communities uniquely accept, reject, or adapt a technology in
light of their core beliefs and practices.[63] This appears to have occurred
among Manitoba Anabaptist-Mennonite communities in the 1940s, '50s,
and '60s. Both MB and CMM communities had an established practice of
itinerant and local church evangelism. For example, within two years of the
establishing the first MB church in Burwalde, Manitoba in 1888, members
requested that the US Mennonite Brethren send them evangelists, which

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[61] Frank H. Epp, "The Grace of God Covers It All, September 1962," in *The Dynamics of a Strong Life*, radio talk 174.
[62] Frank H. Epp, "A Prescription for Peace, November 1962," in *The Dynamics of a Strong Life*, radio talk 182.
[63] Heidi Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 19.

they did.[64] John A. Toews describes 1910-1954 as an "Era of Lay Evangelists" within MB communities across Canada, one that included numerous "Bible school and Bible college teachers who devoted their summer months to evangelistic work."[65] The Canadian Conference of MB Churches first considered establishing a conference evangelist at the 1953 convention and formalized the position with an appointment in 1959.[66] This commitment to and practice of evangelism had its historical precedent in the influence of Pietism as a "major factor in bringing about a new life movement that eventually resulted in the formation of the M.B. Church."[67] Cornelius Krahn summarizes Pietism's contribution as "the emphasis on a personally experienced salvation, on the Christian outreach at home and abroad, and the use of newer forms of spreading the Gospel."[68]

Evangelism was also practiced by the CMM community surrounding Frank Epp. Epp recalls how his early spiritual formation was impacted by a "tendency toward Fundamentalism in the church program, which was stimulated and more clearly defined by numerous travelling evangelists and gospel radio programs."[69] From1947 to 1956 in Manitoba, according to Anna

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[64] Neufeld, *From Faith to Faith*, 30.

[65] Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren*, 316. In 1960 Frank Epp included an MB Bible College summer evangelist, F.C. Peters, in a survey assessing the form and content of *Abundant Life*; see "Program Evaluation for Abundant Life," October 19, 1959, Hist Mss 1.26, PF MRM Survey 1960s, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[66] Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren,* 317-19, identifies 1954-1972 as the "era of Conference evangelists."

[67] Ibid., 364.

[68] C. Krahn, cited in Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren,* 365. See also Andrew Dyck, "The MB Genome Project," *MB Herald*, February 2012, www.mbconf.ca/home/products_ and_services/ resources/publications/ mb_herald/february_2012/features/mb_genome/, accessed May 1, 2016. For MB affinity to evangelicalism leading to the borrowing of literature and radio resources in the 1940s and '50s, see Bruce L. Guenther, "From Isolation and Ethnic Homogeneity to Acculturation and Multi-Cultural Diversity: The Mennonite Brethren and Canadian Culture," *Direction* 39, no. 2 (2010): 138-61; Bruce L. Guenther, "Reflections on Mennonite Brethren Evangelical Anabaptist Identity," in *Renewing Identity and Mission: Mennonite Brethren Reflections after 150 Years,* ed. Abe J. Dueck, Bruce L. Guenther, and Doug Heidebrecht (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2011), 47-82; also Ray Harms-Wiebe, "The Global Mennonite Brethren Mission Movement: Some Reflections and Projections," in *Renewing Identity and Mission*, 218–19.

[69] Frank H. Epp, ""My Mission in Life in the Light of My Christian Faith," ii.

Epp Ens:

> Evangelism was happening everywhere. There were evangelistic services in private schools, in congregations, in mission churches, at youth retreats, at children's camps and at conferences. Evangelistic tent crusades silhouetted the Manitoba horizon. Summing up the work of the home mission committee at the 1952 Manitoba Conference sessions, the resolutions committee concluded that one of its most important tasks was that of saving souls. Reports frequently indicated how many persons had been saved or had found peace with God.[70]

A striking example of this evangelistic interest in southern Manitoba is the revival meetings in Altona, Steinbach, Winkler, and Winnipeg held by George Brunk, a Mennonite evangelist from Virginia, from June to September 1957. Frank Epp's *Revival Fires in Manitoba* reports the strong collaboration between Brunk and local Mennonite leaders in hosting these meetings. Attendance was in the thousands, and in Altona alone "first time decisions as well as rededications, [were] a total of 380."[71] Three special issues of *The Canadian Mennonite*, of which Epp was the founding editor, also reported on the events.[72] In terms of Heidi Campbell's argument, the strong evangelistic precedent in the historical core beliefs and practice of Manitoba Mennonites informed how the medium of radio would be adopted. One might say that the impulse towards a rhetoric of conversion was carried to Manitoba through the reverberations of itinerant evangelists who had come before.

Further impetus to adopt a rhetoric of conversion came from the radio environment of the day. James Opp points to an array of personalities who refined the evangelistic radio style for the prairies. These included radio preacher and Alberta premier William Aberhart in Calgary during the mid-1920s, and Henry Hildebrand of Briercrest Bible Institute in Caronport, Saskatchewan, broadcasting the *Young People's Hour* on CKCK in Regina in

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[70] Epp Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 111.

[71] Frank H. Epp, ed., *Revival Fires in Manitoba* (Denbigh, VA: Brunk Revivals Inc., 1957).

[72] Epp offered a favorable review of the events; see Loewen and Nolt, *Seeking Places of Peace*, 148.

1936.[73] John Schmidt describes how his brother Bill was drawn to conversion after hearing the radio program of L.E. Maxwell, president of Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta.[74] Through his brother's experience, Schmidt came to believe "in prayer and fasting, but also in the effectiveness of radio evangelism."[75] Schmidt and Epp conducted personal correspondence and obtained program preparation resources from other Christian radio producers, including those putting out *The Mennonite Hour*, *Back to the Bible*, and *Hour of Decision,* among others.[76] Also notable is Epp's intense research during his graduate studies at the University of Minnesota into Billy Graham's methods and strategies.[77] An amusing attestation to interplays within the radio milieu is an *Abundant Life* listener's letter from Steinbach, Manitoba dated October 12, 1957, commending the previous day's program, written on the back of a prayer and donor letter from a couple working with the *Back to the Bible* broadcast in Frankfurt, Germany.[78] *Back to the Bible* had been started by US Mennonite Theodore Epp in the 1930s.

Emphasis on Social Transformation
While *The Gospel Light Hour* and *The Abundant Life* shared a rhetoric of conversion, they differed in their emphasis on social transformation. Radio scripts spanning 1950 to 1963 reveal distinct stylistic differences between the

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[73] James W. Opp, "The New Age of Evangelism: Fundamentalism and Radio on the Canadian Prairies, 1925–1945," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (1994): 102, 106, 112.

[74] Timothy Wray Callaway offers a detailed analysis of Maxwell's radio programs in "Training Disciplined Soldiers for Christ: The Influence of American Fundamentalism on Prairie Bible Institute during the L.E. Maxwell Era (1922–1980)," Thesis, University of South Africa, 2010, uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/3369.

[75] Schmidt, *The Lord's Donkey*, 26.

[76] For Schmidt, see Vol. 1244, File 5 Assurance. – ca. 1953–1962, John M. Schmidt fonds, CMBS, Winnipeg, and Vol. 277, File 12 BC260.2.2, Director's Correspondence and Reports 1957, Mennonite Hour correspondence, Square One World Media Series, CMBS, Winnipeg. For Epp, see Hist Mss 1.26, 88. Religion - Co - CC Christian Crusade, 1961–1964, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[77] Frank H. Epp, "Mass Communication and Persuasion in Religion: A Case Study of Billy Graham," Hist Mss 1.26, 8. Biography - g - Pe - EFH MA - Thesis Papers, 1960, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[78] "Letter from Henry G. Ens to Frank H. Epp, Steinbach, Manitoba," October 12, 1957, CMM-MRM/FLC, Vol. 628, File 1 Response – 1957, MHA.

two producers. One the one hand, Schmidt took a consistently expositional and doctrinal approach in crafting his program. A sermon series from 1955 exemplifies this approach. A sermon for October 30, 1955 entitled "The Passover Lamb Ex 12:12–13" opens with this: "In a series of messages on the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, we have come to the very heart of the book of Exodus, namely 'REDEMPTION by the PASSOVER LAMB.'" Schmidt's emphasis here moves from interpretation of Scripture to implications for the human condition. Expositions included cultural allusions, anecdotes, and quips, but were delivered as a complete sermon and organized as a study of Scriptural texts.[79] On the other hand, Epp's scripts for *Abundant Life* were topically constructed, opening with cultural allusions, newspaper clippings, quotes from US presidents, and references to poets, philosophers, and theologians, and then moving into Scripture.[80] George Wiebe, first music director of *Abundant Life*, describes conversations about interspersing music between spoken word segments.[81] Broadly speaking, Epp's content began with the sociopolitical circumstance of the listener and then turned to an exploration of Christian principles. A workshop conducted by conference leadership in 1962 indicates that this structure was not altogether comfortable for some who contrasted the "life-situation approach" to an "evangelistic" one. Minutes indicate that in the end Epp's theology was deemed sound but his approach was questioned.[82]

While a comparison of Epp's and Schmidt's scripts demonstrates distinct production approaches, the differences are more than simply a matter of form. A close reading of two programs aired in 1962 bears out this judgment. In March Epp delivered a series of four radio talks on *Abundant Life* entitled "Revolutionary Christianity." Just a few weeks earlier Schmidt had delivered a sermon at the South End MB Church in Winnipeg during a special 15th-anniversary broadcast of *Gospel Light Hour* on February 18.[83]

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[79] Program outlines are found in Vol. 283, File 15 BC260.18.6, English Program Formats Gospel Light Program 1957–58, Square One World Media Series, CMBS, Winnipeg.

[80] Numerous program outlines are available in Vol. 625, File 1 Abundant Life Formats Frank Epp. – January 1960–July 1965, CMM-MRM/FLC Series, MHA, Winnipeg.

[81] George Wiebe, personal conversation, May 10, 2016.

[82] "Findings of the Radio Workshop held in Altona, March 23–24, 1962," Hist Mss 1.26, PF MRM Reports, 1956–1963, Frank H. Epp fonds, MAO, Waterloo.

[83] Frank H. Epp, "Revolutionary Christianity, March 1962, Sermon Pamphlet," CMM-MRM/

Epp had been on the air since 1957, Schmidt since 1950. Their addresses in 1962 came at a time when both had honed their convictions and delivery. The two messages offer distinct insights into the place of social transformation in their theological understandings. Schmidt's focus was almost exclusively on peace with God through Christ, while Epp retained this fundamental salvific center but cast a vision for transformation of the social order. Both men prayed the Lord's Prayer with an unyielding desire to see "Thy Kingdom come," but what they meant by "on earth, as it is in heaven" was markedly different.

At *The Gospel Light Hour*'s anniversary event, which also aired as a special broadcast, Schmidt offered a seven-minute sermon and closed with these words:

> Let us point men and women, boys and girls to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.… May we so act and so live today that the words of the King, will be our blessing now and forever more, for in as much as ye have done it unto one of these the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Lord direct, empower and bless our lives to thy glory and to that end we pray, Amen.[84]

The Scripture referenced was Matthew 25:40, where Jesus describes how those who offer the stranger food and drink will find favor with God. Schmidt's singular theme that day was motivating and inspiring the audience to proclaim verbally the Good News of Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls. By implication, the action to be taken on behalf of "the least of these" was to share with them this message of salvation.

A few weeks later just across town Epp put forth his "Revolutionary Christianity," describing it "as a force of rebirth and renewal [that] was meant to be the dynamic of history. The Christian faith was to be the harbinger of change and progress, constantly exchanging the old decadent order for

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FLC, Vol. 753, Abundant Life Sermons, File 5 1962-March, MHA, Winnipeg; *Gospel Light Hour 15th Anniversary Broadcast, 1962*, CD, Square One World Media Archives, Winnipeg; "Gospel Light Hour Fifteenth Anniversary," *MB Herald*, February 1962, copy received from John C. Klassen, Winnipeg, via e-mail communication.

[84] Transcription of *Gospel Light Hour* 15th Anniversary Broadcast, 1962.

the new emerging one."[85] Epp's conception of Christianity began with the person of Christ, who came "proclaiming a revolutionary message, 'I am the way; I am the truth and I am life; no one comes to the Father except by me' (John 14:6)."[86] Epp describes conversion as "the rebirth of personality" at the heart of this Christianity, chiding superficial revivalism and evangelism that offer mere emotional crisis and verbal assent as "synthetic manifestations."[87] Further, when "Christ captures a man's life, enters it within, and there effects new attitudes, new ideas, new motives, which emanate in new actions, we have a most revolutionary experience."[88] Menno Simons and Walter Rauschenbush, the US social gospel advocate, are cited as examples of leaders who coupled soul-saving with social action, where the evangelist becomes the prophet embodying "the dual thrust of the Christian faith: bringing man to heaven and bringing heaven to man."[89]

Epp saw as inseparable the individual dimension of salvation and the social dimension of concern and love for neighbor; the Christian church would "champion the cause of social and economic righteousness." He stated emphatically that

> At all times, in all places, in all situations, revolutionary Christianity presents a full gospel for the whole man in the total situation, introducing the principles of the Kingdom into the social order of men. Revolutionary Christianity seeks the answer to its own prayer, that 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.'[90]

When he spoke in October 1959 on Matthew 25—the same text that Schmidt had referenced in his anniversary broadcast—Epp entitled his talk "Hungry-Sick-Naked" and described the refugee crisis of 1949 in Palestine, calling listeners to act on behalf of others.[91] While both broadcasters shared

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[85] Frank H. Epp, "Revolutionary Christianity," March 1962, MHA, Winnipeg.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Frank H. Epp, "Hungry-Sick-Naked, October 1959 Sermon Pamphlet," CMM-MRM/FLC, Vol. 753 Abundant Life Sermons, File 2 1959 – October, MHA, Winnipeg.

a strong conviction of the need for personal salvation, Epp conceptualized salvation to include transforming the social order in more emphatic terms.

Conclusion

John M. Schmidt and Frank H. Epp, both strong adherents of their respective Mennonite communities, stood behind microphones only a few blocks apart and enacted an emerging public Mennonite voice in southern Manitoba. The timbre of those early years of *The Gospel Light Hour* and *The Abundant Life* was marked by a rhetoric of personal conversion that espoused salvation and peace with God through Jesus Christ. The two programs diverged, however, in their emphasis on transformation of the social order. Both Schmidt and Epp ended their respective leadership roles with *Gospel Light Hour* and *Abundant Life* in 1963, leaving behind significant communication legacies of zeal, conviction, and creativity. Their weekly programs broadcast a compelling Mennonite voice that found its way into thousands of homes in Manitoba and across Canada.[92]

The research I have presented in this essay signals at least three trajectories for further investigation. First, given the scope of these two programs in their respective communities, there would be merit in seeing how the communication dispositions I have identified played out over the next decades of radio production in the Mennonite community. To what extent did these approaches and understandings knowingly or unknowingly mark the pattern of future media production? Second, it would be worth extending Jeremy Wiebe's fine analysis of the interplay between Mennonite broadcasting interests and group identity in southern Manitoba.[93] Consideration could be given to how these two flagship programs informed Mennonite sensibilities. And third, while acknowledging the contested nature of Bender's "Anabaptist Vision," it would be heuristically valuable to probe these radio programs in relation to Bender's conviction that personal

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[92] I am very grateful for research assistance provided by Conrad Stoesz, Archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Archives; Jon Isaak, Director at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies; and Laureen Harder-Gissing, Archivist, Mennonite Archives of Ontario. Their efforts were invaluable in facilitating the investigation of primary sources.

[93] Jeremy Wiebe, "A Different Kind of Station: Radio Southern Manitoba and the Reformulation of Mennonite Identity, 1957–1977" (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2008), FGS - Electronic Theses and Dissertations (Public), hdl.handle.net/1993/3128.

conversion and social action are two primary characteristics of Anabaptist thinking and belief.[94]

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[94] Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 18, no. 2 (April 1944): 67-88. For an important assessment of the historiography around Bender's work, see Bruce L. Guenther, "Rediscovering the Value of History and Tradition," in *Out of the Strange Silence: The Challenge of Being Christian in the 21st Century*, ed. Brad Thiessen, Bruce L. Guenther, and Doug Heidebrecht (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2005): 192-95.

Eating as One? Dutch Mennonite Anti-sacramental Response to the 1982 WCC Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Report

Iris Speckmann

Introduction

In 1982, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches published a report on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (hereafter *BEM*), describing what the Commission then saw as ecumenical convergence on three ecclesiological matters that had divided churches for centuries. The WCC asked its member churches to offer responses "from the highest appropriate level of authority" on the extent to which each could recognize "the faith of the Church through the ages" in the text of *BEM*. Churches were asked to answer "as precisely as possible" and to organize a process of reception among their respective constituencies.[1] As a WCC member, the Dutch General Mennonite Society[2] gave a response that can be characterized as a searing critique of the sacramental language of the report, particularly the section on the Eucharist.

Although a sense of anti-sacramentality was not uncommon among Mennonite theologians, I want to problematize it in this essay. I will take the discourse between *BEM* and the Dutch Mennonite response on the Lord's Supper as the point of departure for a reflection on the usability of sacramental language in Mennonite theology. At a time when Mennonite theologians (at least in North America) are reevaluating the theological usefulness of such language, a review of Dutch Mennonite anti-sacramental reasoning in its *BEM* response will expose some undesirable theological consequences of their view. For the purpose of this re-evaluation and future theological thinking, I will proceed in three steps.

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[1] World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* [*BEM*]. Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: WCC, 1982), preface, vi, viii. View the document at https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text.

[2] In Dutch: Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (ADS).

First, I review the discourse between *BEM* and the Dutch Mennonite response, with respect to both the theological content and the rhetorical moves that are made. Using the technique of close reading—a tool of rhetorical discourse analysis[3]—keeps my interpretation sensitive to the fact that these two texts not only *say* something but also *do* something. Functioning within the network of ecumenical relationships, they are diplomatic, political texts that try to assert doctrinal power and thereby influence their readers. Whereas *BEM* tries to build an ecumenical identity, portraying itself as a record of growing convergence of WCC member churches, the Mennonite response fences off its own identity from this alleged consensus. Awareness of this rhetorical tactic allows me to take a step back from doctrinal presumptions, whether ecumenical or Mennonite, and to see through a phenomenological lens what happens in the discourse. After reviewing both documents, I further reflect on the Dutch Mennonite response from a systematic theological perspective, showing how a radical non-sacramentality is problematic in light of the eucharistic understanding of the early Anabaptists, and suggesting the theological consequences of this understanding. Lastly, I argue that conceptions of sacramentality help to articulate God's involvement in the Lord's Supper. Illustrating how sacramental theology has developed since *BEM* was published, I show that these conceptions can help create a fuller understanding of the Supper for Mennonites, and that such an understanding is crucial for maintaining a sense of transcendence in a postmodern, post-secular, and post-Christian culture like that of the Netherlands.

I
A Discourse Analysis of *BEM* and the
Dutch Mennonite Response

Both *BEM* and the Dutch Mennonite response are part of a worldwide inter-confessional effort, ongoing for several decades, to reach a mutual understanding on key doctrinal issues of the Christian faith.[4] Issues

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[3] Titus Hjelm, "Discourse Analysis," in *Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. M. Stausberg and Steven Engler (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 134-50.
[4] The oldest drafts of *BEM* date to 1967. See Max Thurian, ed., *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.* Faith and Order Paper 116 (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 197.

surrounding baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church leadership (ministry) have divided churches for centuries and have even led to deadly violence between confessional branches. Against that background, *BEM* is a remarkable document of diplomacy that witnesses to an increasing convergence of former theological antipodes.

However, many theological and ecclesiological differences remain. Although *BEM* clearly describes some of them, the text also reflects tensions and compromises. When the Mennonite Church in the Netherlands received the report, it could have responded by staying close to the text, pointing to the tensions and delivering constructive feedback on how to move the dialogue forward. However, Dutch Mennonites replied with a critique, using the occasion to bring Mennonite identity into high relief by stressing that a Mennonite understanding is non-sacramental. On the whole, they showed little willingness to offer helpful comments or concrete suggestions for future conversation. Why was this? In what follows, I analyze what is happening within and between these two textual sources, focusing solely on the eucharistic sections of both documents where sacramental terminology receives the most attention.

Analysis of *BEM*

In the exchange between *BEM* and the Mennonite response, the issue clearly revolves around the notion of sacramentality. The *BEM* text uses the term "sacrament" as a matter of common parlance, while the Mennonite respondents characterize their view of baptism and the Eucharist as "non-sacramental." Focusing on the use of the word "sacrament" in *BEM*, one notices that the term in effect gets a definition in an introductory paragraph in the section on the Eucharist:

> Consequently the Eucharist is a sacramental meal which by visible signs communicates to us God's love in Jesus Christ, the love by which Jesus loved his own "to the end" (John 13:1). It has acquired many names: for example, the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread, the holy communion, the divine liturgy, the mass. Its celebration continues as the central act of the Church's worship.[5]

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[5] *BEM*, "Eucharist," no. 1, 8. In the text of this essay, I refer to the numbered paragraphs in *BEM* as "articles."

Sacraments, then, are "visible signs" that communicate to us "God's love in Jesus Christ." So far, this is similar to common definitions that see "sacrament" as "a (visible) sign of God's (invisible) grace, wisdom, or love" (a common definition since the time of St. Augustine).[6] This broad definition is very general and functional, stressing what the Supper *does*.[7] However, the sacrament of the Eucharist is given prominence among other visible signs: it is "the central act of the Church's worship." This prominence is further emphasized throughout the report. Article 2, for instance, states that the Eucharist is in essence hosted by God:

> In the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. [8]

Defined as a meal that God is hosting, the Eucharist becomes primarily the act of God and not a ritual in the hands of its participants. Further, this article states that Christ is granting communion with himself, which means he is an active presence during the Supper. This hosting by God and the presence of Christ is further elaborated in Article 13:

> [T]he eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence. […] Christ's mode of presence in the eucharist is unique. […] The Church confesses

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[6] For instance, Dorothea Sattler, "Sacrament," in Erwin Fahlbusch et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 792-93.

[7] The Eucharist appears to be characterized here in a neutral way—as a sign that "communicates." "Communication" can denote that the Supper is merely a tool for God and people to use. But Mennonites should be alert as to how the communication takes place: Is the Supper, according to this text, just a sign that refers? Or does the ritual bring about Christ's presence in a mechanical or automatic way? It is hard to read the word "communication" without recalling the long history of theological debate. Using the technique of close reading, I focus on the wording of the *BEM* text, postponing the question of what it could denote for Mennonite readers and bracketing Mennonite theological pre-understandings. As a sacrament, the Supper has the performative power to do something through the sharing of bread and wine that goes beyond mere sharing and eating. God's love shines through the ritual in some way. The *BEM* text, at least in Article 13, is silent on where this performative power is located.

[8] *BEM*, "Eucharist," no. 2, 8.

Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist. While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required.[9]

The prominence given the Eucharist comes to a climax in Article 13, which stresses that this mode of Christ's presence is unique. In addition, the Eucharist is interpreted as a ritual that can bring about Christ's presence *unconditionally.* Although there is a need "to discern the body and blood of Christ" and "faith is required," this dimension is not decisive. As God is host, the subjective disposition or intentionality of the recipients is of secondary importance. The performative potential of the sacrament is objectified here, attributing to it the power to bring about a presence of Christ that is "real, living and active" while downplaying the subjective dimension.

Unsurprisingly, problems arise within the ecumenical discourse exactly on this point, since stressing the objective dimension over the subjective dimension is a cause of painful and classic divisions among WCC member churches. The commentary on Article 13 shows that incompatible understandings are still not resolved:

> Many churches believe that by the words of Jesus and by that power the Holy Spirit, bread and wine of the eucharist become, in a real though mysterious manner, the body and blood of the risen Christ, i.e., of the living Christ present in all his fullness. […] some other churches, while affirming a real presence of Christ at the eucharist, do not link that presence so definitely with the signs of bread and wine. The decision remains for the churches whether this difference can be accommodated within the convergence formulated in the text itself [i.e., Article 13].[10]

Although this commentary acknowledges a divergence, the formulation is rhetorically striking. By using "many" and "some other," the writers make two rhetorical moves. First, they portray the convergence as identifying a conflict between two general positions. From a critical rhetorical perspective, one can ask if there were more positions than the two portrayed,

[9] Ibid., no. 13, 10.
[10] *BEM*, "Eucharist," no. 13, commentary, 10.

given the complexity of theologies and range of traditions represented in the WCC. Second, the "many … some other" formulation subordinates one position to the other. How significant was the lack of consensus, and which theological positions were silenced in drafting the report? *BEM* lacks transparency by failing to show how many members of the Faith and Order Commission supported either position portrayed here.[11]

Although these questions may seem to put too much stress on negligible subtleties in the text, I suggest[12] that some readers may have interpreted the "many . . . some" as disadvantaging their own position.[13] If so, this could explain why the Dutch Mennonite response was quite fierce. Consider that in building up to Article 13, the Eucharist is ascribed a strong performative power to bring about Christ's presence, which is attached to bread and wine. The Eucharist is called the most prominent act of worship, one in which Christ's mode of presence is unique. If one is aware of how conflict about the Eucharist has been brewing over many centuries—and if one reads from a Mennonite perspective—it is hard not to interpret this formulation as restating the doctrine of transubstantiation or at least a form of sacramentalism, even though *BEM* takes pains to avoid such terms.[14] Such a reading is even more tempting because this line of thinking actually appears in the main text: while Article 13 stresses that the Eucharist is "the sacrament of the real presence," divergence of opinion is relegated to the

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[11] Compare, for instance, the commentary on Article 15, where the lack of consensus is portrayed in more neutral categories ("some/others" instead of "many/some"). BEM shows signs of what critical discourse analysis calls "producing a hegemony" or "suppression of variety within the discussion." See Hjelm, "Discourse Analysis," 142.

[12] This might be a likelier possibility for readers from the smallest WCC member churches, such as the Dutch and German Mennonites. The Dutch Society of Friends made a similar critique, as did the Salvation Army. See Max Thurian, *Churches Respond to BEM,* Volumes I-VI (Geneva: WCC, 1986-1988).

[13] "The main text demonstrates the major areas of theological convergence; the added commentaries either indicate historical differences that have been overcome or identify disputed issues still in need of further research and reconciliation." *BEM*, preface, vii.

[14] I define sacramentalism as "the type of thinking that regards the substance of salvation as a reality as enclosed in the means, so that appropriation is viewed as independent of conscious reception (faith), the mechanical effect upon a soul that is also thought of in terms of substance." See Notger Slenczka, "Sacramentality," in Fahlbusch et al., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol. 4, 800-802.

accompanying commentary. Since the main text celebrates the supposed convergence, churches deviating from it are likely to feel disadvantaged—and likely to object.

The convergence presented in the *BEM* text collects a range of readings of sacramentality. In the beginning of the section on the Eucharist, the sacraments are generally defined as "visible signs of God's love," but later in Article 13 and the accompanying commentary they are no longer merely a medium for communicating God's love. While "communication" implies a certain mutuality or at least an active receptivity, *BEM* now stresses God's initiative and sovereignty—so that the Eucharist becomes almost a one-sided act of transference. The term "sacrament" now refers to a rather autonomous supernatural phenomenon having an objective performative power to transfer grace. It is portrayed primarily as an instrument for God to use, and it reduces the faithful recipients to passively accepting what is transferred to them.

Analysis of Dutch Mennonite Response

The Dutch Mennonites' official response was written by two Mennonite Seminary teachers on behalf of the General Mennonite Society in the Netherlands. After opening with the statement that bringing reconciliation was the center of Jesus' mission, thereby acknowledging the WCC's efforts to work on theological convergence, the authors add this relativizing comment:

> When we state that churches must consider themselves a uniting church engaged in a ceaseless struggle to resist through the powers of God's Spirit all forces that carry with them and sustain division, it is our conviction that in this struggle definitive priority will have to be given to questions of peace and justice. We have noted that it is these questions that oppress the minds of a large number of members of the brotherhood. Simultaneously, the questions centering around baptism, eucharist and ministry appear to attract little attention. Rather, it is found that active Christians of different churches celebrate the Lord's Supper together as a matter of course without worrying about denominational obstacles. They are obviously

not awaiting for a consensus of the eucharist.[15]

In other words, while the respondents appreciate the intent of the ecumenical effort, their relativizing rhetorical gesture suggests that doctrinal issues raised by *BEM* are less important to the Mennonite constituency than social justice. This can be read as an implicit critique of the whole ecumenical debate on sacramental theology, and at the very least the debate on the doctrine of the Eucharist. Where *BEM* states that the Eucharist is the central act of the church's worship, the respondents imply that this worship is found elsewhere, namely in being a peace and justice church. Rhetorically speaking, their introduction reframes the debate and suggests that more attention should be directed to issues of justice and peace than to doctrinal questions of sacramentality.

After this introduction, the authors discuss the three sections of *BEM* separately. However, instead of closely following the text, they elaborate on the meaning of the Lord's Supper from their Mennonite perspective. They explain that the Eucharist in their tradition is a matter of "keeping oneness."[16] This phrase stresses that the ritual should be regarded "in the light of the work of God, who is liberating mankind [sic] from its rebellion against him and from the mutual opposition and strife which is the result of this rebellion, by joining people together in the new community of the congregation." Referring to Galatians 2:27ff, the authors depict God as the initiator of the reconciling and equalizing movement among peoples, and the congregation as a first bridgehead in the world where God's conciliating work is embodied and becomes concrete and visible:

> [T]he congregation forms the specific part of the world that by virtue of God's conciliating and liberating work does not have to resign itself to being divided, but may consider itself empowered to resist division with all its strength and to distinguish itself from the world as a community of peace, a peace church. That it has been called and empowered to do this is expressed in its celebration of the Lord's Supper. This celebration should

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[15] "Response of the General Mennonite Society (Netherlands)" in Thurian, *Churches Respond to BEM*, Vol. III, 289-90.
[16] Ibid., 293.

therefore be seen—no different from the celebration of baptism—as an act of confession.[17]

That is, the Lord's Supper is less a celebration of God's reconciliation but more an act of confession by which the congregation confesses or commemorates its empowerment to resist division and to distinguish itself from the world as a peace church. The focus of this view is on *ecclesio*-logy more than on *theo*-logy: the Supper expresses the ecclesiology of a peace church.

Continuing this line of thinking, the respondents stress that a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper

> puts pressure on the congregation to distinguish itself in the right way from the world as a city on a mountain. So wherever this does not happen, the question imposes itself whether Christ is present at that particular celebration.[18]

Here, they put decisive weight on the intentionality of the congregation and the necessity to discern how faith is lived out. However, whereas *BEM* minimizes subjective intentionality, the Mennonites stress it. The congregation is portrayed as acting out the ritual during this ceremony of confession. Although God through Christ initiates the reconciliation that made the community possible, his presence during the Supper is conditional on the commitment of the congregation to live up to its calling as a peace church.

Summarizing their argument, the authors state that their view of the Lord's Supper is non-sacramental:

> Clearly this non-sacramental interpretation of […] the Lord's Supper raises a number of questions on some of the formulations of the statement as well. When for instance par. 2 states: "In the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member", we reserve to ourselves the right to interpret these kind of

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[17] "Response of the General Mennonite Society (Netherlands)" in Thurian, *Churches Respond to BEM,* Vol. III, 292.
[18] Ibid., 293.

pronouncements in light of the foregoing.[19]

Without elaborating on their view of sacramentality, the authors seem to believe that their exposition is sufficiently clarified by the use of the term "non-sacramental." Following the argumentation of the text,[20] they point only to Article 2 as a specific instance where their reading might take a non-sacramental direction.

Because the authors' view is not fully explicated, one can make only an educated guess on how to interpret this rhetorical move. From a traditional Mennonite perspective, one might think that their main objection would be to the notion that intentionality is not decisive for the performative power of the Lord's Supper. Or they could be rejecting *BEM*'s characterization of the mode of Christ's presence as "real, living and active." Since the authors point to Article 2, their basic objection seems directed to the notion of Christ granting communion with himself, which might place him as a "real, living presence" or portray God as the main host. One must conclude that this is their key point against *BEM*'s conception of the sacramentality of the Eucharist. According to the Mennonite respondents, the Lord's Supper is not so much a meal hosted by God as it is an act of confession by which, as I have already noted, the congregation expresses its empowerment and commitment to follow Jesus in his struggle against divisions. For the authors, it is not so much God as the congregation who is the main ritual actor. Christ might join the occasion, but this is not what they focus on. They stress the human side of the ritual.

While the respondents characterize the Eucharist as a non-sacramental act of confession, this characterization is problematic. On the one hand, it seems to describe accurately the eucharistic theology of the Mennonite document, because the Lord's Supper is reduced to a ceremonial act of confession on the human side. It is not so much a "visible sign" that communicates God's invisible grace, since God is not ascribed an active ritual role. On the other hand, one could claim this theology is indeed "sacramental," since it illustrates the Mennonite tendency to shift sacramentality from the elements of bread and wine to the congregation itself: it is the congregation

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Again, I am using the close reading technique employed in critical rhetorical analysis. I seek to discern what is in the text and what is (surprisingly) absent.

that becomes the "visible sign" of God's invisible involvement with people.[21] Assembling around bread and wine, the reconciled alternative community becomes the immanent sign or paradigm of God's invisible striving for reconciliation.

II
The *BEM* Response in a Broader Mennonite Theological Perspective

Now we are in position to reflect further on the eucharistic theology emerging from the Mennonite response to *BEM* from a broader systematic theological perspective. Since the respondents claim their reaction is sufficiently representative of a Dutch Mennonite understanding of the issues that *BEM* is addressing, we can ask where this non-sacramental understanding comes from, whether it is consistent with historical Mennonite views, and whether it is consistent with prevailing 20th-century views. It is equally important to reflect on the consequences of a non-sacramental understanding of the Eucharist. Below I will argue that a non-sacramental interpretation is theologically limited.

Response to *BEM* and Eucharistic Theology of Early Anabaptists
Mennonites have often found the term "sacrament" to be problematic. For early Anabaptists such as Conrad Grebel, "sacrament" referred to the liturgical practices and theology of the church of his day. Perhaps the most illuminating comparison between the Dutch Mennonite response to *BEM* and early Anabaptist reflections on the Lord's Supper is to the eucharistic theology of Balthasar Hubmaier. Interpretation of the Supper as an act of confession is equivalent to Hubmaier's interpretation of it as a human "pledge."[22] While Hubmaier validated the word "sacrament," he wanted to deconstruct its meaning, bringing back the earlier Latin understanding

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[21] C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1993), 351-63.

[22] John Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism: A Study in the Christology of Balthasar Hubmaier, Pilgram Marpeck, and Dirk Philips* (Waterloo, ON; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 44.

of the term as a military oath of loyalty.[23] Following this idea to its logical conclusion, the *BEM* respondents took his deconstruction a step further and framed their view of the act as non-sacramental. John Rempel's characterization of Hubmaier's view of the Supper as "a pledge to live out the grace previously given"[24] helps one interpret the Dutch response. However, there is also an important difference. Whereas Hubmaier focuses on the Supper as a human embodiment of Christ's self-giving and love within the intimacy of the congregation,[25] the *BEM* response reaches further outward, moving away from an intimate language of spiritual union of the inner circle towards a language of political and social responsibility and engagement.

This difference has consequences for conceiving God's ritual involvement with the Supper or God's participation during the Supper *in actu*. The Dutch response shows that emphasizing the Supper as an act of confession and the responsibility of the congregation "to distinguish itself in the right way from the world as a city on a mountain" results in overshadowing the Supper's spiritual and metaphysical dimensions. There is almost no elaboration of pneumatological or Christological aspects; the focus is on anthropological and ecclesiological responsibilities. This is why I characterize this theology as "eucharistic deism": although the authors acknowledge that God through Christ instituted the ceremony, it is as if God then retreated into a passive distance. If primarily characterized as an act of confession, the Supper seems to become only that—an expression of the congregation's intention to be a peace church, an act of ecclesiological self-expression.

As has been recognized in recent decades, not all early Anabaptists rejected the term "sacrament" or notions of sacramentality in their eucharistic theological reflections.[26] When investigating the several kinds of

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[23] Wayne H. Pipkin and John Howard Yoder, trans.and eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottdale, PA; Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1989), 391.

[24] Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, 44.

[25] Hubmaier states that "bread and wine are word symbols of his love, by which we remember how he, Christ, was our Christ, and how we also are always to be Christ to one another" from "Several Theses Concerning the Mass," in Pipkin and Yoder, *Balthasar Hubmaier*, 75, and "a pledge of love ... that one Christian performs toward the other" in "A Christian Catechism," ibid., 354.

[26] "Sacrament" in Harold S. Bender, ed., *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Volume IV (Scottdale, PA:

sacramental theology within the broad Anabaptist movement, one realizes that the Dutch response to *BEM* could have been different if it had taken another stream of Mennonite tradition as its point of reference. For instance, Pilgram Marpeck did not object to using the term "sacrament." Although he preferred "ceremonies" for internal discourse among Anabaptists,[27] he saw no objection to "sacrament" within inter-confessional debates or his own writings. He even dedicated a whole chapter of his "Admonition" of 1542 to "What the Word Sacrament Really Means and Is,"[28] in which he describes his view. This account might prove helpful if one wants to conceive of sacramentality in a way that is neither a restatement of sacramentalism nor a form of eucharistic deism. In a remarkably modern fashion,[29] Marpeck describes a sacrament as a symbolic exchange between God and human participants. With the ritual exchange of bread and wine, the covenant of friendship and love between God and humans is expressed, (re-)affirmed, and re-kindled. A sacrament involves mutuality: it stresses both sides of the exchange.

To show that Marpeck was not exceptionally sacramental among early Anabaptists, I contend that his description of sacramentality illuminates the eucharistic theology of Menno Simons. While furiously attacking the liturgical practices and theology of the church of his day, Simons still used the term "sacramental sign" for the Lord's Supper.[30] Some say that he used the adjective "sacramental" in the same way as Hubmaier, accepting the reduced Latin meaning in which a sacrament was the military vow of a soldier, a seal

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Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), 397.

[27] Ibid. See also Pilgram Marpeck, "Lord's Supper" in Walter Klaassen et al. trans., *Later Writings by Pilgram Marpeck and His Circle*, Volume 1 (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1999), 105.

[28] Pilgram Marpeck, "Admonition" (1542), in William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, ed. and trans., *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Kitchener, ON; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978), 169-72.

[29] Marpeck's understanding seems to be the 16th-century equivalent of the sacramental theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet. Compare, for instance, Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo Press, 1995), 108-109.

[30] Menno Simons, "Lord's Supper," from a *Fundamental and Clear Confession of the Poor and Distressed Christians* in J. C. Wenger, ed. and Leonard Verduin, trans., *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons c. 1496-1516* (Scottdale, PA; Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1956), 515.

of commitment to his lord.[31] However, I am not convinced that Simons had this restricted meaning in mind, because there are more mystical notions in his eucharistic theology than there are in the Dutch Mennonite response to *BEM*. To be sure, the authors of the response are following in Simons's footsteps when they stress the intentionality of the assembled congregation as decisive for the spiritual quality of the Lord's Supper. Without the right spirituality of faith and discipleship, there can be no Supper, according to Menno. This stress on human intentionality, which points to a shared spiritual responsibility between human and divine participants, counters *BEM*'s over-emphasizing of God's sovereignty and the Eucharist as a one-sided communication or transference of God's grace. For Simons, as for other early Anabaptists, the harmony of the gathered body of Christ was a *sine que non* for the sacramentality of the Supper, in opposition to the then common theological position.[32] However, Simons never took his protest against sacramentalism so far as to completely rule out the "sacramental sovereignty" of God, or to deny the Supper's potentiality to become a medium through which God and humans mutually and actively communicate.[33]

Furthermore, Simons had a mystical view of the Eucharist that seems lost in the Dutch Mennonite response. By quoting Matthew 18:20, he acknowledges that Christ is mystically present during the Eucharist.[34] Although not explicitly portraying Christ as a host as *BEM* does, this mystical notion points to a presence of a strong quality[35] that is "real, living and active." While Simons rejects a sacramentalistic *ex opere operato* or mechanical transference of grace, he acknowledges the Eucharist's performative and

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[31] *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, IV*, 397.

[32] Simons, "Lord's Supper," 148.

[33] By "sacramental sovereignty" I mean the sovereignty by which God can communicate his presence by breaking into daily reality through earthly phenomena and things regardless of the disposition of people. Biblical examples include the burning bush (Exodus 3:2) and the cloud (Exodus 16:10).

[34] Matt. 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," quoted by Simons. See Simons, "Lord's Supper," 148.

[35] This opposes the recent conclusion of Scott McKnight, "Menno Simons," in Justin S. Holcomb and David A. Johnson, *Christian Theologies of the Sacraments: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2017), 175-90. But it is in line with Joel Z. Schmidt, "The Challenge of Menno Simons' Symbolic View of the Lord's Supper" in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 6-26.

communicative potential to become more than a memorial, pledge, or act of confession.

Read this way, Simons's eucharistic oeuvre is more in line with Marpeck's view of the sacrament as a symbolic exchange than with Hubmaier's deconstruction of the sacrament as a purely human pledge, act of confession, or act of remembrance. Like Marpeck, Simons locates the sacramental performativity of the Lord's Supper ceremony in the act of people coming together in Christ's name. He describes the Supper as a gathering of a congregation that trustfully waits for a risen Christ to join the communion and the just, as he had promised. Through the promised mystical presence of Christ, the Supper becomes a focused, ritual moment, which Simons calls not only a "sacramental sign" but a "marriage feast."[36] Like Marpeck, he seems to interpret the Supper as a ritual encounter celebrating a covenant of love between God and loyal participants. In this reading, the Supper is indeed a sacrament, both in the common understanding where a sacrament denotes "a visible, signifying ritual act that communicates God's invisible love," and in the sense of Marpeck, who describes it as a moment of symbolic exchange of mutual love and friendship between God and faithful communicants. Marpeck's sacramental understanding of the Supper, then, is not exceptional.

This reflection on Anabaptist eucharistic theology of the 16th century suggests that there are at least two streams of thought on sacramentality: one radically deconstructs the sacramental understanding of the Lord's Supper, reducing the meaning of "sacrament" to a human pledge of loyalty and discipleship; the other interprets the Supper as a "sacramental" symbolic exchange between God and human in which Christ's spiritual presence or God's grace and love becomes tangible. The Dutch response to *BEM* has strong historical roots in the first stream but little affinity with the second.

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[36] Simons, "Lord's Supper," 148. My reading challenges former interpretations of Simons that deny, for instance, the mystical implications of his bridal imagery. Although I build on Schmidt's case for regaining sacramentality, I disagree with his denial of the presence of mystical notions within Simons's thinking (see Schmidt, "The Challenge of Menno Simons' Symbolic View," 13). When Simons writes about the Supper as a bridal feast, his style becomes lyrical in a way that is difficult to interpret as anything other than mystical. Simons clearly thinks of the Supper as a moment of intensified intimacy between Christ and his bride, the congregation.

Consequences of a Non-sacramental Understanding of the Lord's Supper

From a Mennonite perspective, the ethical dimension of the Lord's Supper is key to its quality: by sharing the Supper, the gathering of disciples enfleshes the other-worldly ethics that Christ embodied. The harmony of the congregation is decisive for any possibility that the ritual might become "sacramental," an event of intensified spiritual intimacy in which Christ becomes re-presented or where divine presence beomes tangible. This stress on the ethical dimension is a common feature of Mennonite eucharistic theology—not only in Simons, Marpeck, and Hubmaier but also in more contemporary Mennonite theologians.[37] Arguably, *BEM* put the horse ahead of the cart by placing metaphysical, doctrinal issues at the front and ethics at the very end of the eucharistic section.[38] Because *BEM* stressed the Eucharist as the central act of worship, underlining the objective dimension, the Dutch Mennonite respondents saw no alternative but to emphasize the subjective dimension, in which the participants' commitment to be a peace church becomes conditional for Christ to be present. However, both *BEM* and the response are problematic when examined from a broader theological perspective.

First, the reasoning by which human intentionality is conditional for God's potential to reveal himself is an unbiblical denial of God's sacramental sovereignty. From a biblical perspective, God can reveal himself through earthly means or events, wherever and however he pleases, whether we are in harmony or not. Second, the *BEM* respondents overstate human responsibilities. In their argument, the congregation is portrayed as a realized *eschaton* that must live up to the high ethical standard of the Kingdom of

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[37] See Pieter Post, "Maintaining Unity in Faith: Toward a Theological Link between Baptism, Foot Washing and the Lord's Supper," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, Fall 2005, 67-76; Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City. An Anabaptist Theology of Culture* (Waterloo, ON; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000), 145-49; John Howard Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer," in Michael G. Cartwright, ed., *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Waterloo, ON; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 364-66.

[38] Mennonites were not alone in this critique, which relates to the tension between the two commitments of the ecumenical movement: "unity of the Church" and "renewal," defined by the WCC as "the prophetic task of the Church to be God's witness to the world." See *The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community,* Faith and Order Paper 151 (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

God. This kind of eucharistic theology makes "excessive anthropological, pneumatological and regenerationist demands,"[39] leaving little room for a more dynamic understanding of the new birth or regeneration by the Spirit. Further, as already noted, when the Lord's Supper is viewed primarily as an act of confession, then the eucharistic understanding becomes increasingly immanent and anthropomorphic. The Dutch Mennonite response illustrates what John Rempel articulated in his study of the eucharistic theology of early Anabaptists:

> In current Mennonite writing and practice, nothing is said about God's action in the event [. . .] nothing is said of his presence.[40]

The response relativizes the importance of metaphysical conceptualization and reduces the Eucharist to an expression of the congregational commitment to peace. This results in eucharistic deism. Mystical notions of God's presence, whether in a Christological or a pneumatological mode, are overshadowed by ethical notions of the responsibility to be a messianic city on a mountain and an alternative society in the world.

Response to *BEM* and 20th-Century Mennonite Theology
By interpreting the Lord's Supper as an act of confession, the Dutch Mennonite response to *BEM* was a reflection of its time. Underscoring the ethical implications of the Supper in an almost secular frame of political and social engagement was consistent with the theological currents flowing among Mennonites in the 1980s.[41] According to Paul Martens, 20th-century Mennonite theology had become focused on defining Mennonite identity by boldly contrasting it to other denominational identities.[42] In articulating a commitment to societal issues while maintaining a radically Christian alternative, Mennonite theologians increasingly stressed discipleship as an ethical commitment. The quest for identity had an apologetic, even polemical, character: Mennonites defined their identity as radically separate, taking

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[39] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 394.
[40] Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, 225.
[41] C. Arnold Snyder, "Mysticism and the Shape of Anabaptist Spirituality," in C. Arnold Snyder, ed., *Commoners and Community: Essays in Honour of Werner O. Packull* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002).
[42] Paul Martens, "How Mennonite Theology became Superfluous in Three Easy Steps: Bender, Yoder, Weaver," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 33 (2015): 149-66.

ethics as their identity marker over against mystical notions of Christian discipleship regarded as "catholic."[43] This demarcated identity meant a preoccupation with the immanent, anthropological, and ecclesiological dimensions of sacramental theology. The tendency was to interpret the sacraments as outward signs of an eschatological, alternative sociability.[44] The Dutch response to *BEM* is a revealing illustration of this line of thought.

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III

Sacramental Theology beyond *BEM*:
God's Involvement in the Eucharist

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In conclusion, I will sketch how sacramental theology has developed since *BEM* was published in 1983 to show how sacramentality became attached to not only the eucharistic elements of bread and wine, but the dynamics between all the aspects of the ritual—material, kinetic, and spiritual—and led to further convergence across denominational borders. In discussing the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (CFMP),[45] I suggest that there are signs of a re-evaluation of sacramentality in the Mennonite view of the Lord's Supper. This is a constructive development that will help to

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[43] Ibid., 152. Martens illustrates this tendency, quoting Harold Bender, who asks, "Is Christianity primarily a matter of reception of divine grace through a sacramental-sacerdotal institution (Roman Catholicism), is it chiefly enjoyment of inner experience of grace of God through faith in Christ (Lutheranism), or is it most of all the transformation of life through discipleship (Anabaptism)?" Bender states that "The Anabaptists were neither institutionalists, mystics nor pietists, for they laid the weight of their emphasis upon following Christ in life." See Harold Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1960), 22.

[44] Friesen, *Artists, Citizens Philosophers*, 145-49. John Howard Yoder, a significant voice in 20th-century Mennonite theology, was typical in this regard: see John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 44; John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001); and John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984, 2001), 93-94. For a critical discussion of Yoder's sacramental theology, see Paul Martens, *The Heterodox Yoder* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 134-37. While Yoder's influence on the Dutch response to BEM is obvious, reflected in its similar motives and patterns, his oeuvre is compromised by his personal ethical conduct. We should continue to engage Yoder's written work, but in the context of his whole legacy.

[45] http://mennoniteusa.org/confession-of-faith/

articulate more clearly God's presence within the Supper.

Beyond Denominational Entrenchment

BEM was a result of decades of dialogue (locally, nationally, and internationally) that led to a cross-pollenation of theological traditions. Meanwhile, academic theology and ecumenical dialogue were also influencing the denominations. *BEM* was a report on a growing convergence, and although it was an unsatisfying compromise for several WCC members,[46] it catalyzed further constructive theological discourse.[47] For instance, Catholics and Protestants alike are now exploring similar routes to interpret the Eucharist from the standpoint of its full ritual dynamics instead of primarily on the basis of theological, ontological essences.[48] Ecumenical dialogue reveals how sacramentality becomes attached to the whole ritual dynamic of the Lord's Supper. For example, Catholic eucharistic theology attaches the sacramentality of the Eucharist not merely to the priestly consecration of the bread and wine but to the whole dynamic of God, priest, and congregation.[49] In this sense, there is a richer understanding of sacramentality across denominational boundaries, whereby the Eucharist in its full performativity becomes a medium for a focused encounter of God and people.[50]

The sacramental theology of *BEM* made its mark on Mennonite

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[46] Erin M. Brigham, *Sustaining the Hope for Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue in a Postmodern World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 104-105.

[47] Sattler, "Sacrament," 799-800.

[48] This can be seen in the work of several theological scholars across denominational borders. A Catholic example is Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*; a Lutheran example is Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, & Resurrection* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007), 5. An example from a Mennonite perspective is Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 205-207.

[49] For a current exposition of the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist within dialogue with Mennonites, see Fernando Enns and Jonathan Seiling, eds., *Mennonites in Dialogue: Official Reports from International and National Ecumenical Encounters 1975-2012* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 77, 81.

[50] Chauvet helpfully calls it a "symbolic exchange." See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 99-109.

thinking too, at least within North American Mennonite discourse on the Lord's Supper. As Joel Z. Schmidt has shown, *BEM* played a role in the draft of CFMP (1995), in regard to the issue of the Supper as a meal of remembrance.[51] Acknowledgement that remembrance in the biblical sense (*anamnesis*) is more than an exercise of memory led to a nod of agreement with *BEM*'s sacramental language in the personal notes of the chairman of the drafting committee.[52] The recognition that remembering in the biblical sense is more like reliving the events—becoming part of everything remembered— led to a formulation that was more sacramental than usual for 20th-century Mennonites. In the wording of Article 12, sacramental notions are clearly evident, as in this statement: "The supper re-presents[53] the presence of the risen Christ in the church." Although using the word "sacrament" is avoided by employing the prevailing word "sign," the language opens a theological space in which a mystical understanding and experience of Christ's presence can emerge. This possibility is elaborated in the accompanying commentary:

> The bread of the Lord's Supper is a sign of Christ's body, and the cup is a sign of the new covenant in his blood (Luke 22:19-20). As Christians eat the bread and drink the cup, they experience Christ's presence in their midst. The Lord's Supper both represents Christ and is a way in which Christ is present again ("re-present") in the body of believers.

In an indirect but subtle way, *BEM* inspired language that expresses the performative potential of the Supper to "re-present" the risen Christ. Although the word "sacrament" is avoided,[54] the Confession signifies that the Mennonite understanding is recovering a sense of sacramentality, showing a growing sensitivity that the Supper has a performative strength beyond

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[51] *BEM* is mentioned in reference to remembrance in Joel Z. Schmidt, "The Lord's Supper in the 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective: Re-presenting the Body of Christ," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 81 (July 2007): 351-69.

[52] Ibid., particularly 366-68.

[53] Hyphen intended. In the Dutch translation the hyphen was omitted. See Sjouke Voolstra, ed., *Christelijk belijden in dopers perspectief. Een vertaling* (Amsterdam: Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit, 1997), 51, 52.

[54] Similar to the Swiss, who in a dialogue with Lutherans stated they were "increasingly prepared to recognize what 'sacrament' means, without including this term in their common speech." See Enns and Seiling, *Mennonites in Dialogue*, 150.

human acts of confession or memorialization. A sense of transcendence is being recovered that was lost in the Dutch Mennonite response to *BEM*.

Sacramentality and Transcendence in a Post-Christian, Post-secular Context

Systematic theology is a highly contextual enterprise. Within the ecumenical context of the 1980s, Mennonites found it necessary to re-identify with the early Anabaptists' struggle against an overly mystified theology of the Eucharist, thereby defining their identity as a church that put ethics first. But thirty-five years later and outside the context of polemics with other denominations, I find myself writing in a context of rigorous secularism in Western Europe that has taken its toll on Mennonites and other confessional denominations. At the same time, the paradigm of post-secularism permits not only desacralization but also re-sacralization—a rekindling of the awareness that life is sacred and given instead of self-made. Within a post-secular scheme, transcendence and immanence are not opposing but closely related dimensions.[55] Embedded in a highly secularized post-Christian culture, the walls of the Dutch Mennonite churches are highly permeable in relation to the prevailing spiritual and intellectual environment. In my view, a radical non-sacramental understanding is not sufficient to articulate experiences of transcendence in the Lord's Supper. Indeed, the non-sacramental scheme of eucharistic deism fosters only a sense of anthropomorphic immanence and further stimulates the flat, empty secularism that is daily imposed on us and that we bring embodied to the Supper table.

In this essay, I have tried to show that there are at least two streams of sacramental theology within the historical Anabaptist tradition. The impression might be that the sacramental deconstruction à la Hubmaier and

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[55] See Conor Sweeney, *Sacramental Presence after Heidegger: Onto-theology, Sacraments, and the Mother's Smile* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 75, 122; David Brown, "A Sacramental World: Why It Matters," in Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), 603-13; Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010), 85-87, 94-95, 99-100; and L. Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context: A Playground for Theological Renewal," in L. Boeve and Lambert Leijessen, eds., *Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context* (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press; Sterling, VA: Peeters, 2001), 20-23.

Marpeck, and Simons's mystical re-construction of the sacrament, are two opposite positions, with Hubmaier reducing the Supper to an immanent sharing in which Christ is remembered but metaphysically absent, and Marpeck and Simons pointing to a ritual exchange in which there is a transcendent presence that is "real, living and active." However, in a worldview in which transcendence and immanence are no longer considered only as strict opposites, it would be fruitful to view these seemingly conflicting historical perspectives as standing in a dialectic relationship. Doing so could assist contemporary efforts to go beyond a dichotomy between transcendence and immanence and to explore the creative space between eucharistic deism and sacramentalism.

However, without sacramental language, it will be increasingly hard to conceptualize God's involvement with our earthly reality, since it is this language that traditionally captures the closeness of heaven and earth, and the transformative power of the sacred over the profane. Writing in a post-secular context, I believe the signs of a Mennonite re-evaluation of sacramental language and concepts are promising and encouraging. This re-evaluation will open creative possibilities for Mennonite theologians to engage in a dialogue on sacramentality with scholars beyond denominational borders.

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One Generation Away:
Martyrs Mirror and the Survival of Anabaptist Christianity

David L. Weaver-Zercher

The tendency of authors to imagine their books will benefit every audience, and should therefore be read by everyone, is nothing new. In 1659, as the Dutch Mennonite minister Thieleman van Braght finalized his preface to *The Bloody Theater* (now called *Martyrs Mirror*), he took time to address a trio of age-specific audiences, each of which he believed would profit from the book's contents. Along with aged readers and middle-aged ones, van Braght identified young people (*Jonge lieden*) as potential beneficiaries.[1] These youthful readers, he wrote, would be well served by *The Bloody Theater*, for in its pages they would find persons who were "fourteen, fifteen, eighteen, twenty years old" and who, presumably unlike them, had "forsaken the vanities of the world and the lusts of youth." These young men and women had not simply forsaken their ungodly desires but they had also "remembered their Creator and Savior, bowed their youthful members under His yoke, accepted His commandments, obeyed Him with all their heart, and surrendered themselves willingly to Him—so that they, for His sake, did not spare their lives unto death."[2]

How did 17th-century young people respond to van Braght's invitation to read his book? We simply don't know. We do know, however, that the desire to place this work into the hands of young Anabaptists did not expire with van Braght's death in 1664. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the book's 350-year reception history is the lingering presence of young adults—not so much *their* voices but the concern about them in the voices of those who sought to multiply the book's influence: publishing agents, church

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leaders, and parents. These proponents of *Martyrs Mirror* sometimes wanted young people to buy the book; or if not that, to at least read it; or if not that, to be apprised of its contents in church or at home. This was true in the 18th century, the 19th century, the 20th century, and the 21st century: the hopes for the book, expressed by older adults, frequently fixed on young persons coming of age.[3]

In this essay I will explore that reality as it played itself in a number of 20th- and 21st-century settings. The custodial desire to get young people to ponder the martyrs became so widespread in the last half of the 20th century that it can be easy to overlook its counter-intuitiveness. We might ask a question like this: If religiously committed adults want their children to embrace their brand of the Christian faith, why remind them that the people who embraced it were hunted down, tortured, and killed? In considering this question, it will be helpful to place the use of *Martyrs Mirror* in the context of larger conversations about emotional appeals to youth as well as conversations about what leads youth to make religious commitments. In particular, we will want to consider what one Christian educator, Kenda Creasy Dean, calls an "invitation to oddity," a phrase she connects to psychologist Erik Erikson's claim that adolescents are searching for something "to die for."[4] We will begin, however, with a mid-20th-century example of commending the Anabaptist martyrs to young adults, an example that is at once both unique in its details and commonplace in its goals.

The Survival of the Fittest Church
In 1950, Gerald Studer, a twenty-three-year-old Mennonite minister, produced a one-page article heralding the reprinting of *Martyrs Mirror* by the Mennonite Publishing House. A student of Mennonite history with a keen interest in youth ministry, Studer saw this publishing event as a rich opportunity for securing adolescent faith commitments.[5] His article,

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[3] For numerous examples, including the production of the first North American edition of *Martyrs Mirror* in the 1740s, see David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2016).

[4] Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 35.

[5] As a Goshen College student, Studer published "A History of the *Martyrs' Mirror*" in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 22 (1948): 163-79. He later served on the board of Christopher

published in a Mennonite Church periodical aimed at young adults, urged quick action ("Order yours now so that you don't miss it!") and highlighted "a few things" that readers would find in the massive martyr book. For starters, wrote Studer, those who buy this new edition of *Martyrs Mirror* would read about a sixteen-year-old girl "whose youth and beauty stirred such pity that all begged that her life be saved." When the adolescent girl refused to recant, he continued, "the executioner carried her in his arms to a horse trough and held her under water until she was dead, then laid her lifeless body on the flames."[6]

That Studer featured the story of a teenaged martyr for his young adult audience is not surprising. In fact, he followed that particular story with three other examples from *Martyrs Mirror*, all of which featured young adult victims.[7] But the story of the sixteen-year-old girl, the most detailed of the four examples he offers, is remarkable for at least three reasons. First, Studer takes care to tell his readers that this girl was physically beautiful, a beauty that in his telling made it all the more tragic to her contemporaries that she was being executed. Second, he underscores the physicality of the executioner's treatment of his victim, noting that he "carried her in his arms" to the site of her death. Third, and perhaps most remarkable of all, while the story of this teenaged girl can be found in another Mennonite source—C. Henry Smith's *The Mennonites*, published in 1920—it doesn't actually appear in *Martyrs Mirror*.[8]

Studer's use of a non-*Martyrs Mirror* account to encourage young people to buy *Martyrs Mirror* may have been an unintentional gaffe; that is, Studer may have read the story in Smith's history and mistakenly thought that Smith had gotten it from *Martyrs Mirror*. Nonetheless, when we compare

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Dock Mennonite High School in eastern Pennsylvania.

[6] Gerald C. Studer, "You Can Afford a *Martyrs Mirror*," *Youth's Christian Companion* (July 1950), 247.

[7] The other three stories that Studer cited are found in van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (1938), 182, 429, 762.

[8] C. Henry Smith, *The Mennonites: A Brief History of Their Origin and Later Development in Both Europe and America* (Berne, IN: Mennonite Book Concern, 1920), 26. Smith's story bears some resemblance to a *Martyrs Mirror* account in which "several sisters" were drowned in "a horse pond." In the *Martyrs Mirror* account, however, neither the women's age nor their physical attractiveness receives any mention; see van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (1938), 437.

Studer's version of the story to Smith's version, we can see more clearly Studer's goals in telling this particular story. Whereas Smith informs his readers that the girl's "innocence" stirred onlookers to pity, Studer says it was her "beauty"; and whereas Smith's executioner simply "fastened [the girl's] hands to her side" before drowning her, Studer's executioner "carried her in his arms" to the horse trough, then carried her lifeless body to the flames. In these ways, Studer intensifies the visceral, even sensual nature of what was already a gruesome story. Helping his mid-century readers, particularly young male readers, to imagine the girl's physical beauty, her manhandled body, and her horrific death, he seeks to heighten their emotional response to their church's martyrological past.

In her 2013 essay, "Mightier than the Sword: *Martyrs Mirror* in the New World," Julia Spicher Kasdorf notes that those who composed martyr accounts in the 16th and 17th centuries often awarded female Anabaptist martyrs a "combination of idealized masculine and feminine qualities."[9] Steadfast in the face of death, these women were praised for their "manly courage" and their "valiant manliness," even as they were identified with their roles as nurturing wives and mothers.[10] Studer's exemplary female martyr demonstrates courage, to be sure, but he ascribes to her characteristics— beauty and passivity—more befitting of the ideal woman in postwar America.[11] Studer knew that mid-century Mennonites had increasing access to sensational stories in the media, and he sought to redirect their sensory experiences in service of the church. "You can't avoid being shocked by crime news on the radio," he advised his youthful readers, but "you can afford to be uplifted by the gruesome but glorious stories" in *Martyrs Mirror*.[12] These exhilarating stories, he said, would help them recognize what it means to live "as strangers and pilgrims in the earth instead of [as] wealthy, complacent

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[9] Julia Spicher Kasdorf, "Mightier than the Sword: *Martyrs Mirror* in the New World," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 31 (2013): 55.

[10] Kasdorf cites two particular *Martyrs Mirror* accounts in this regard: the martyrdoms of Ursula van Essen and Christina Haring. See Kasdorf, "Mightier than the Sword," 55-57; and van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (1938), 844, 441.

[11] For conceptions of the ideal woman in the 1950s, see Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The* Feminist Mystique *and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 67-70.

[12] Studer, "You Can Afford a *Martyrs Mirror*," 247.

citizens of a smug North American community." Moreover, these stories should remind youth that in the final analysis everything depended on them, because they demonstrated that "the Mennonite Church has been founded and kept going by the lives and deaths of many young people."[13]

Studer's claim has some historic validity: some Anabaptist martyrs were indeed young, and their witness likely inspired some Anabaptists to take their faith more seriously. But the more historically compelling component of the claim is that the Mennonite Church, like most religious entities in human history, has been kept going by the *lives* of young people. That is, the survival of Anabaptism over the centuries, at least in North America, has hinged upon the willingness of relatively safe Anabaptist teenagers, like those reading Studer's article, to embrace the faith of their mothers and fathers. As theologian Stanley Hauerwas has frequently jabbed, North American Mennonites like to think of themselves as a believers' church, but the fact remains that most North American Mennonites, especially through 1950, carried names like Yoder and Landis and Friesen and Reimer. In other words, most 20th-century North American Mennonites were cradle Mennonites who, as young adults, could have chosen otherwise but opted to embrace their parents' faith. And because this process of making and retaining babies has been the primary survival strategy of most North American Anabaptist churches, the question that every generation has faced was this: What are the most effective practices for retaining the children of the church, especially when the church is asking them to make a countercultural commitment? Given the attenuated state of denominational loyalty in contemporary North American churches, this is a question that has not gone away.[14]

The Passions of Youth and Religious Commitment

The place of passion in the context of religious life, and particularly the elevation of people's emotions to advance religious commitment (as Studer sought to do), has long been a point of contention in American Protestantism.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] For the lack of denominational loyalty, see the Pew Research Center report, "America's Changing Religious Landscape" (2015), especially the chapter entitled "Religious Switching and Intermarriage." http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/05/RLS-08-26-full-report.pdf, accessed September 11, 2018.

From the Great Awakening to the present, critics have frequently charged religious leaders who stimulate emotional reactions with manipulation.[15] These leaders, say their critics, use their authority to induce vulnerable people to make commitments they would not otherwise make. Some of these criticisms have focused specifically on religious activities that engage young people (e.g., the tear-filled campfires on the last night of summer camp), the assumption being that adolescents, already primed for passion, lack the wherewithal to resist the designs of their adult manipulators.[16]

However, the critics of religious passion have themselves had their critics, who argue that a religious life without passion is not a religious life at all. In his assessment of the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards admitted that passionate outbursts did not prove that God's Spirit was at work; at the same time, he said, it was reasonable to believe that an encounter with God's Spirit would manifest itself in an emotional response.[17] In the 20th century, the global advance of Pentecostal enthusiasm redefined the nature of Christianity, not only by giving increased attention to the work of the Holy Spirit but also by validating emotional experience as a principal element of the Christian life. Long before the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles brought Pentecostal fervor to the fore, African Americans assumed that passionate expression—dancing, shouting, and crying—was part and parcel of authentic Christianity, and they sometimes chastised whites who reduced the Christian faith to intellectual claims and sedate worship rituals.[18]

It is one thing to suggest, as Jonathan Edwards did, that people respond emotionally when they encounter the Spirit of God; it is another to claim that spiritual transformation happens by way of massaging of people's emotions. Nevertheless, one prominent American revivalist was unapologetic about

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[15] For instance, Charles Chauncy, "A Letter to Mr. George Wishart," in *The Great Awakening*, ed. Richard L. Bushman (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1969), 116-21.

[16] For a consideration of the Friday night campfire, see Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 100-105.

[17] See especially Jonathan Edwards, "On the Great Awakening," at www.nhinet.org/ccs/docs/-awaken.htm, accessed September 5, 2018.

[18] For a recent example of this critique, see Jason E. Shelton and Michael O. Emerson, *Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Religious Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2012), 57-85.

using such means to convert the masses. In his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 18th-century revivalist Charles Finney argued that revivals were not miracles but the results of human efforts that raised people's "excitements" for God to the point of spiritual surrender. Because the world was filled with so many ungodly excitements, "there must be [religious] excitement sufficient to wake up the dormant moral powers and roll back the tide of degradation and sin."[19] Finney did not stop with theoretical claims, but instead offered his readers a catalog of "measures" he found effective in transporting the unconverted to the place of commitment, most famously the "anxious seat," where those under conviction could sit while others gathered around them to pray.[20] The point of the anxious seat was ultimately to relieve people's religious anxieties, though not before raising these excitements to a fever pitch. A hundred years later, revivalist Billy Graham used the hymn "Just as I Am" in much the same way: as a means to foster life-changing commitments by transforming into joy the spiritual anxieties his sermon had just raised.[21]

Mid-century Mennonites used similar means to secure religious commitments. A few years after Graham's first citywide crusade in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1947, George R. Brunk II and Myron Augsburger began holding their own revival meetings in Amish and Mennonite regions of North America. Their evangelistic services, typically held in tents, featured "all the trappings that had come to define the American revivalist tradition," writes Devin Manzullo-Thomas, trappings that included "expressive preaching, compelling music, modern methods of advertising and promotion, and invitations for listeners to leave their seats, walk down the aisle to the altar, and experience a religious conversion."[22] Like Graham, Augsburger sometimes used "Just as I Am" as his closing hymn, though not as often as "Almost Persuaded," a hymn that urges sinners to "come [to

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[19] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (New York: Leavitt, Lord, and Co., 1835; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1960), 12. Page numbers refer to the Belknap edition.

[20] Ibid., 267-68.

[21] For Graham's invitational technique, see Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2014), 63-67.

[22] Devin Manzullo-Thomas, "America's Pastor among the Quiet in the Land: Billy Graham and North American Anabaptists, Part I," https://anabaptisthistorians.org/tag/howard-hammer/, accessed September 5, 2018.

Jesus] today" because tomorrow the "harvest is past" and "doom comes at last!"[23] Mennonite teenagers flocked to these revivals, and they sometimes responded positively to the evangelists' pleas. One girl recalls sitting with her peers on the front row of a Brunk revival, and together they went forward for prayer. Recalling the event years later, she noted that the whole experience was "kind of fun" but also rather "heavy."[24]

The North American revival tradition has often been criticized, and because its means of massaging people's emotions are so carefully calculated (and so often dread-inducing), it is an easy target. Still, it is only fair to note that all religious traditions rely on human means to foster spiritual commitment. In *Choosing Church: What Makes a Difference for Teens*, Carol E. Lytch uses "socialization" as an umbrella term for the typical means by which young people are introduced to the symbols, rituals, narratives, and habits of the Christian life.[25] Sermons, catechetical instruction, Christian education classes, and youth group gatherings: these are just a few of the socializing means that a congregation might use to foster religious loyalty in young adults. These measures not only introduce young adults to the faith of their older adult mentors, but in most cases they serve an apologetic function, offering a defense of a particular approach to religious life as a valid approach, if not the best one.

While socialization is critical for fostering young adult commitment, Lytch contends that a second reality is equally important. She calls this second reality "religious experience," a time when in retrospect a young person recalls that he or she had experienced God or at least God's calling in his or her life. These experiences typically occur when the rhythms of ordinary religious life are disrupted or intensified. They most often happen at a geographical remove from ordinary life but they may also happen on familiar turf, when the narrative of Christianity is cast in a new key or when the ordering of the standard religious fare is upended in some way.[26] These

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[23] James O. Lehman, *Mennonite Tent Revivals: Howard Hammer and Myron Augsburger, 1952-1962* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002), 186.

[24] Quoted in Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements: A Community Paradigm* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 285.

[25] Carol E. Lytch, *Choosing Church: What Makes a Difference for Teens* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 58.

[26] Ibid., 59-60.

experiences transform an acquired faith into a personally appropriated faith. They "breathe meaning into old, familiar symbols and practices," which in turn leads to a deeper involvement in one's religious community where those symbols and practices reside.[27] Lytch's argument is not without empirical foundation. In her study of three large congregations in Louisville, Kentucky, Lytch found that the most religiously loyal teens, those who were deeply involved in congregational life and planned to remain involved, were ones whose lives included both consistent religious socialization and religious experiences filled with high emotion.[28]

Lytch does not connect her thesis about fostering religious commitment to the use of martyr narratives, but a second Christian educator, Kenda Creasy Dean, fills in the blanks. In *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church,* Dean notes the widespread fascination that contemporary American youth have with martyr stories. Pointing to examples in recent American history, including the story of a teenaged girl killed in the school shooting in Columbine, Colorado in 1999, she writes that "the life of the martyr fascinates adolescents, not because they want to share the martyrs' grisly suffering, but because they envy their passion, their purpose, [and] their brazen determination."[29] Like the martyrs they read about, these adolescents want to "die for" something, says Dean—though, like Erik Erikson, she tempers this phrase to mean that youth are driven by fidelity, that is, "the search for something and somebody to be true to."[30] According to Dean, American young people are too often told, even in the church, that to be an adult in contemporary North America they must

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[27] Ibid., 62. Lytch cites the work of C. Ellis Nelson in her discussion of the interplay between socialization and religious experience.

[28] For a similar view, see John H. Westerhoff III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 73-76. See also Bob Yoder, "Nurturing the Faith of Mennonite Youth: A Historical Review," in *A History of Mennonite Youth Ministry, 1885-2005*, ed. Bob Yoder (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2013), 11-62. Yoder cites Lytch's work at various points.

[29] Dean, *Practicing Passion*, 250. Researchers David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins agree with Dean that "young adults today are interested in [the] martyrs' lives of jeopardy and fulfillment." David Kinnaman, with Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church…and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 105-106.

[30] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1968), 233, 235.

abandon their passions, capitulate to half-truths, and settle down—a message that compromises the notion of an authentic religious commitment. Dean, whose primary point of view is youth ministry in the United Methodist Church, sounds a warning that other observers of mainline Protestant youth culture have also made, namely that young adults flee mainline churches not because they are offended or intellectually unconvinced but because they are bored.[31] Rather than feed teenagers the bland American "heresy of wholesomeness," congregations would do better to extend to them an "invitation to oddity."[32] In fact, Dean says, the best Christian practices for fostering young adult commitment are ones that "heighten the tension between youth and their culture, and mark them as people who belong to a community 'set apart.'" [33]

Dean's recommendation for adolescent youth formation may sound strange to mainline Protestant ears, but it is not far removed from Gerald Studer's invocation of the Anabaptist martyrs as strangers in a spiritually complacent world. In the following decades, Mennonite revivalist-turned-college-president Myron Augsburger would commend the same set of martyrs for a reason that paralleled Studer's: to underline the contrast between faithful Christianity and an encroaching culture of unfaith. In *Pilgrim Aflame*, published in 1967, Augsburger expanded the relatively brief *Martyrs Mirror* account of Michael Sattler into an historical novel that in various ways made Sattler's story more emotionally compelling to his 20th-century readers.[34] Ten years later, in *Faithful Unto Death*, Augsburger narrated the stories of fifteen Anabaptist young people put to death in the

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[31] Laura Darling, "Listening to the 'Nones': An Interview with Elizabeth Drescher," *Confirm, Not Conform* blog, May 13, 2013, www.confirmnotconform.com/blog/listening-nones-interview-elizabeth-drescherm, accessed September 13, 2018. See also Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Religious Lives of America's Nones* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016).

[32] Dean, *Practicing Passion*, 35-36.

[33] Ibid., 36.

[34] Myron S. Augsburger, *Pilgrim Aflame* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967). Most significantly, Augsburger expanded the story to include Michael's growing attraction and eventual marriage to Margaretha Sattler; e.g., "The two lunched in a little alcove of the inn, and far into the afternoon they talked of their love" (62). The *Martyrs Mirror* account of Sattler's martyrdom, which mentions his wife only briefly, can be found in van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (1938), 416-20.

16th century, stories that showed that "Christian fidelity is not dependent upon long years of involvement in Christian doctrine" but rather is based upon "a genuine, existential relationship with Christ." In a late 20th-century world characterized by "subtle attacks on our faith by secularism," young people would be wise to learn about the martyrs and "follow in their train."[35]

Before the end of the century, Augsburger's enhanced account of Sattler's life would become a feature-length film. *The Radicals*, produced in 1990, was shown widely in Mennonite youth education settings and on Mennonite college campuses. It dramatized Sattler's life with a stirring musical score and portrayed his death in graphic, full-color detail. Writing for a Christian movie review website, one reviewer called *The Radicals* "compelling, dramatic, and inspiring" and encouraged his readers to watch it, even as he warned them about the film's salty language and some "passionate kissing between a man and a woman."[36] Of course, how better to arrest the attention of assimilated Mennonite adolescents than by including a few PG-13-rated scenes? From actual copies of *Martyrs Mirror* in 1950 to historical fiction in the 1960s to an "edgy" film in 1990: this was the trajectory of keeping 20th-century Mennonite adolescents emotionally invested in the 16th-century martyrs and, in the best of all worlds, existentially committed to the faith of their fathers and mothers.[37]

In some late 20th-century Mennonite communities, however, movies were considered unnecessary for holding young people's attention. In these churches, *Martyrs Mirror* and its stirring words were thought to be sufficient for that task.

Encountering the Martyrs at Churchtown Mennonite Church

Churchtown Mennonite Church, located in a brick meetinghouse in south-central Pennsylvania, is a congregation in the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church (EPMC). A conference of about sixty Mennonite congregations, the EPMC was born in the late 1960s, when a number of churches left the

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[35] Myron S. Augsburger, *Faithful Unto Death: Fifteen Young People Who Were Not Afraid to Die for Their Faith* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978), 8.

[36] The review, written by Edwin L. Carpenter, can be found at https://dove.org/review/11350-the-radicals/; accessed September 10, 2018. Carpenter cites the use of "whore" and "whoremonger" as examples of the film's questionable language.

[37] The word "edgy" is Carpenter's term for the film. Ibid.

Lancaster Mennonite Conference.[38] At the time, the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites' primary concern was that the Lancaster Mennonite Conference was becoming too worldly, particularly in the area of dress. Nearly fifty years later they have not changed their minds. A commitment to nonconformity continues to be a strong theme in the EPMC, a theme its male leaders use to distinguish their conference from more culturally assimilated forms of North American Mennonitism.[39]

In fall 2010, Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites from a handful of local congregations gathered at Churchtown Mennonite Church for what they call their "Annual Bible Meeting."[40] As is customary in these churches, the men and boys sat on one side of the sanctuary and the women and girls sat on the other—although on this particular day the teenagers sat with their peers in front of the main seating area, boys on the left and girls on the right. The entire focus of the two-hour gathering was *Martyrs Mirror*, with spoken prayers, congregational hymns, and two forty-five-minute sermons, all aimed at helping those in attendance encounter the book's message.

The sermons were ostensibly for everyone in attendance, but clearly the preachers had shaped their messages with adolescents in mind. Much like Gerald Studer in 1950, the ministers returned time and again to stories of teenaged martyrs, often mentioning specific ones, such as Eulalia, "not more than . . . thirteen years old, who was filled with such ardor of the spirit to die in the name of Christ."[41] In one case, preacher Clifford Martin told of a fourteen-year-old boy favored by the Roman emperor until he refused to pay homage to the Roman gods, at which point the boy was threatened with decapitation.[42] Turning to his adolescent listeners, Martin asked, "Youth here this afternoon . . . would you be able to so defend your faith as this youth did?" Martin quickly conceded that everyone in attendance, regardless of

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[38] Jesse Neuenschwander, "Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church."" *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online.* http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Eastern_Pennsylvania_Mennonite-Church&oldid=160677, accessed September 13, 2018.

[39] See Kenneth Auker, *Keeping the Trust: Issues Surrounding the Formation of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church* (Ephrata, PA: Eastern Mennonite Publications, 2013).

[40] The following account is based on my visit to the Churchtown Mennonite Church near Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, on October 3, 2010.

[41] The story of Eulalia appears in van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (1938), 176-78.

[42] The story of Pancratius appears in van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (1938), 179.

age, should ponder the boy's witness, but by the choice of his and his fellow preacher's martyrological examples, the focus was definitely on the youth.

What message did these preachers want their youth to absorb? Holding fast to the faith was the day's most obvious theme. Indeed, the hypothetical question that martyr books inevitably raise—What would you do in the face of persecution?—was voiced on multiple occasions. More significantly, however, the ministers pointed to less bloody dangers, including the danger of abandoning church-sanctioned forms of nonconformity. The two preachers did not leave the application of this principle to chance. Carrying cell phones, accumulating material possessions, nursing anger, and more generally running after anything that "the church forbids": all of these they identified as worldly traps to avoid. In sum, they used *Martyrs Mirror* to help reinforce traditional forms of nonconformity, a reinforcement that in their view was secured by introducing adolescents to the bloody sacrifices of young people who went before them.

This afternoon was no ordinary time in the life of an Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite young person. In Lytch's words, the rhythms of their religious lives were being "disrupted and intensified" as they found themselves in a packed auditorium, in full view of their parents, surrounded by their closest friends, staring straight across the platform at similarly aged adolescents of the opposite sex. Both literally and figuratively they were being set up to hear the stories of people their age who had been willing to give up their lives for the sake of Jesus. In the coming years, many of these same youth would attend "Winter Bible School," a three-week intensive experience that brings together young adults for fellowship and learning. These Bible Schools, again no ordinary time in the lives of EPMC young adults, are prime settings for meeting potential spouses, and it is not surprising that one frequent course offering focuses on creating a Christian home. Neither is it surprising that another course centers on *Martyrs Mirror,* giving young adults the chance to ponder the gruesome stories of Anabaptist martyrs and measure their own level of commitment against that of their spiritual ancestors.

Given the relatively privileged standing of contemporary North American Mennonites, including those in EPMC, outsiders may wonder about the strong emphasis placed on the Anabaptist martyrs. For the

Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites, these martyrs are truly the fathers and mothers of their specific form of Christianity, which they believe is superior to other forms of North American Christianity, including other Mennonite forms. Kenneth Auker's recently published history of the EPMC bears the title *Keeping the Trust*, and his introduction notes that the book's purpose is to help "the rising generation" value "the steps by which God has led us to where we are today."[43] A primary theme in his book is the spiritual decline of other North American Mennonites, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, when even the Lancaster Mennonite Conference could not withstand "the apostasy that was engulfing much of the Mennonite Church."[44] Thankfully, the EPMC came along to rescue the "time-proven biblical principles and practices" being jettisoned by mid-20th-century Mennonites who enjoyed mixed-gender seating on Sundays, wore modern clothes every day of the week, and pursued college educations when they graduated from high school.[45]

If Auker's book assumes the apologetic task necessary to securing next-generational loyalty, the EPMC emphasis on the martyrs, particularly in settings such as Annual Bible Meetings, provides young people with religious experiences needed to reinforce their congregations' socializing work. By imagining the martyrs' suffering and by imagining themselves as the best hope for preserving the martyrs' faith, many EPMC youth find spiritual resources to live outside the mainstream of North American life. They realize that the trials they face today are not as deadly as those the martyrs faced five hundred years ago. Like their parents, however, many of them will eventually find solace in their marginality, which in their view aligns them with the faithful Christians memorialized in *Martyrs Mirror*. Just as van Braght's teenaged martyrs paid the price for their odd practices, EPMC youth will "pay the price of being considered strange," a feeling of marginality that not only binds them together as young people but also increases their loyalty to the church the martyrs birthed—their EPMC congregations.[46]

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[43] Auker, *Keeping the Trust*, 7.

[44] Ibid., 39.

[45] Ibid., 7.

[46] This quotation comes from page 64 in *The Price of Keeping the Faith,* an undated, unattributed

Martyr Stories, Assimilated Mennonites, and the Virtue of Marginality

The use of *Martyrs Mirror* as a means of securing young adult loyalty makes more sense in conservative Anabaptist circles than it does in more assimilated Mennonite churches, where the virtue of cultural marginality is complicated by iPhones, hip-hop music, and prom dresses. Moreover, the impact of van Braght's bloody stories may be attenuated in communities where youth have easy access to Hollywood movies, first-person shooter games, and the daily news. Still, if Dean is right in claiming that martyrdom is inherently captivating to young people, one would think that this interest could be leveraged even in more assimilated Mennonite youth. Their churches' ministers may not be urging them to abandon their cell phones, but they are almost certainly hoping to instill in them some degree of cultural marginality. Can the 16th-century martyrs be helpful in advancing that marginality? Or might their invocation do more harm than good?

It is difficult to get a measure on the use of *Martyrs Mirror* in assimilated Mennonite churches, but its impact in the first quarter of the 21st century appears to be minimal. In *Thank You for Asking,* Sara Wenger Shenk reports on interviews she and her research assistants conducted with fifty-six Mennonite young adults in the early 2000s. Despite the project's focus on the narratives that shape young people's spiritual lives, *Martyrs Mirror* and Mennonite martyr stories more generally barely merit a mention. One project informant who does reference *Martyrs Mirror* notes that the stories it contains "*are* my stories and they *aren't* [my stories]," an observation she elucidates with the comment that her privileged middle-class existence seems far removed from the book's grisly contents.[47] In a different setting, another young person wondered about van Braght's inclusion of adult baptism as a criterion for true martyrdom, adding that placing such a high priority on baptismal practices was "silly."[48] Some may accuse this latter commentator

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text used in an EPMC Winter Bible School.

[47] Sara Wenger Shenk, *Thank You for Asking: Conversing with Young Adults about the Future Church* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 49 (emphasis in original). In contrast, Shenk's research team looked at the writings of her grandfather, A.D. Wenger, who kept a travel journal as a young man at the turn of the 20th century. They found that Wenger held *Martyrs Mirror* in high esteem.

[48] Jared L. Peifer, e-mail message to author, March 24, 2011. For similar perspectives, see Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History*, 261.

with a failure of historical imagination, a lack of theological seriousness, or both, but the fact remains that the historical distance between 16th-century Europe and 21st-century North America presents a serious challenge to those who would use *Martyrs Mirror* for adolescent faith formation. More recent martyr stories may be more effective in this regard, but for these potential beneficiaries at least, the stories in *Martyrs Mirror* lack the immediacy needed to make them potent.[49]

A second obstacle to using *Martyrs Mirror* in adolescent settings moves beyond the martyrs' seeming irrelevance to qualms about highlighting their suffering. Rooted in a more general concern about teenagers' mental health, this critique has been leveled most pointedly at the use of Jan Luyken's imagery as a shock-and-awe pedagogical technique.[50] Added to *Martyrs Mirror* in 1685, Luyken's images show the martyrs enduring many things, including various forms of torture and death. Captivating in their gruesomeness—burnt bodies, spouting blood, and decapitated heads—they have in some circles eclipsed the text itself as the most scrutinized feature of *Martyrs Mirror*, for they are easier and more interesting to absorb than van Braght's loquacious text. Still, while it could be argued that these images are singularly apt for illustrating the cost of discipleship, some critics have cited their potential to violate the sensitive imaginations of those viewing them.[51] Some Mennonite and Amish parents have decided the images are inappropriate for young children. Still others have suggested they are inappropriate for teens, catalyzing needless nightmares and (potentially, at

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[49] This, of course, was the impetus for *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship*, eds. Charles E. Moore and Timothy Keiderling (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2016), which complements narratives from *Martyrs Mirror* with more recent martyr accounts.

[50] Stephanie Krehbiel, "Staying Alive: How Martyrdom Made Me a Warrior," *Mennonite Life* 61, no. 4 (December 2006); https://ml.bethelks.edu/issue/vol-61-no-4/article/staying-alive-how-martyrdom-made-me-a-warrior/, accessed September 10, 2018.

[51] In addition to accepting Krehbiel's testimony, I base this claim on letters and e-mails I received while researching the reception history of *Martyrs Mirror*. "It scared the shit out of me," wrote one respondent, recalling her youthful encounter with the book. The book was "terrifying," even "R-rated" in its depiction of violence, said another. "I remember crying that night," wrote yet a third, who admitted to reservations about exposing his own middle-school-aged children to the book.

least) advancing the notion that suffering is to be embraced, not avoided.[52]

        These reasons for bypassing *Martyrs Mirror*, when combined with the book's user-unfriendliness, contribute to a general lack of interest in assimilated Mennonite settings. Still, some assimilated Mennonites have not given up on using its contents to secure the next generation of Anabaptists, and in doing so they almost always incarnate Dean's notion of an invitation to oddity. Perhaps the most obvious example of this invitation is a lesson plan produced for middle and high school students by the Mennonite Board of Education in the early 2000s. Titled "To Die For" (a title that more likely played on a popular expression about desirable dating options than it did on Erik Erikson's work), the lesson introduced teens to the stories of a few Anabaptist martyrs, then encouraged them to think about situations in which they, like the martyrs, would risk their social status by holding to their convictions. One of the suggested activities asked students to complete this sentence: "I could see myself making difficult choices because of my belief in . . . ," an open-ended activity that, unlike the directive sermons at Churchtown Mennonite Church, allowed teenagers to imagine for themselves what it might mean to live lives of nonconformity.[53]

        This invitation to oddity has also been extended to youth through Luyken's images, most notably through the image of Dirk Willems rescuing his pursuer from an icy pond. This image, which received relatively little attention in Anabaptist circles before 1950, has become something of an Anabaptist icon in the last fifty years, effective because even a child can grasp its unambiguous message of helping a person in need. Of course, Dirk's rescue image is popular for another reason: it sidesteps the problem of using violent imagery to teach Christian values. There is no blood in this particular image, nor any intimation of death—except for the death thwarted by Dirk's act of rescue. One of the more prominent iterations of Dirk in a youth-oriented context, a wood carving by Amish craftsman Aaron Zook, is found outside the cafeteria at Lancaster Mennonite High School, where students pass by

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[52] The danger of sanctifying suffering is a key component of Krehbiel's critique, a criticism with enough resonance that proponents of *Martyrs Mirror* have found it necessary to address it. See, for instance, John D. Roth and Elizabeth Miller, "Introduction," *Bearing Witness*, xiv.

[53] This lesson is on the Mennonite Education Agency website: www.mennoniteeducation.org/ Resources/Educators /Pages /JWGSeventheighth1.aspx, accessed September 13, 2018.

it every day. The custodians of this image, who have titled it "A Tradition of Love," seek to remind its viewers that a Christ-like commitment to love will almost certainly be odd, for it will extend beyond persons who are easy or convenient to love.

Still other Mennonite youth leaders have used *Martyrs Mirror* to advance an even stranger lesson, the practice of nonviolence. In his "Onward Martyrdom Rap," Philadelphia Mennonite youth leader and hip-hop artist Cruz Cordero urges his listeners to consider the nonviolent example of Dirk Willems and other 16th-century martyrs as they navigate America's eye-for-an-eye culture.[54] According to Cordero, it was the martyrs' witness that attracted him to Anabaptism in the first place, for the martyrs demonstrated the Christ-like faith that he "wanted to experience" for himself.[55] Sensing the difficulty posed by the martyrs' cultural distance from his black and Latino listeners, Cordero moves back and forth in his rap from the 16th-century martyrs to "my man Tom Skinner," a former gang member who, after his conversion in the 1950s, devoted himself to evangelism and nonviolence in his Harlem neighborhood.[56] While insisting that the "historical records [from *Martyrs Mirror*] are not just for the experts / they're there for those who want to learn without lectures," Codero's rap also seeks to update van Braght's centuries-old martyr record by citing the suffering witness of contemporary Christians, including members of Ethiopia's Meserete Kristos Church.

The context in which Cordero seeks to instill Anabaptist values in young adults could hardly be more different from that of Churchtown Mennonite Church. Still, whether their churches are situated in North Philadelphia or in the rural hills of central Pennsylvania, these Mennonite ministers agree that many forces are pulling 21st-century youth away from the faith. They may not be aware of Erik Erikson's work on youth identity formation, but they share his sense that a vital force in adolescents is the search for something or someone to devote one's life to. They are less

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[54] Cordero's rap is found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XImiokalAVE&t=189, accessed September 13, 2018.

[55] An interview with Cordero about the genesis of his martyrdom rap can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlHhNmyrh4c, accessed September 13, 2018.

[56] Tom Skinner, *Black and Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968).

concerned about the psychological damage martyr stories might do to young people than about offering a tepid, culturally conformist message.[57] Most important, they share the conviction that the martyrs' examples, if rightly packaged, can potentially provide a spark that takes young people beyond a cognitive knowledge of the Anabaptist faith to an actual commitment to it. In that sense, these 21st-century Anabaptist ministers share much in common, not only with one another but with many previous generations of Anabaptist church leaders. Like Myron Augsburger, Gerald Studer, and a host of others, indeed, like Thieleman van Braght himself, they believe that the witness of the martyrs can help young people "forsake the vanities of this world" in favor of a more satisfying passion.

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[57] An exposition on the proper and improper use of Anabaptist martyr stories in adolescent Christian educational settings is beyond the scope of this essay. That said, appropriate pedagogy would almost surely include: a youth leader's knowledge of and sensitivity to the students in his/her care, plus an acknowledgment that living for a godly purpose is far better than dying for one, that living an authentic Christian life sometimes leads to hardship, that Christian martyrdom is not the exclusive preserve of Anabaptists, and that Christians have a long history of oppressing others, sometimes in God's name.

Benjamin W. Goossen. *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017.

In this seminal work, Benjamin Goossen explores the intersections of nationality, nationalism, collectivism, ethnicity, and religion among Mennonites in modern Germany and abroad. Rejecting "traditional definitions of both religion and nationality . . . capable of generating uniform communities," he argues that "socially constructed and historically situated, religious and national cosmologies are negotiated at each moment." He exposes how these "evolving relationships" led some Mennonites down the dark path of racism, antisemitism, war, and genocide (5). Goossen ruptures the familiar historical narrative of Mennonite martyrdom and victimhood, and challenges Mennonites to examine their pasts anew.

In the 19th century, German Mennonites confronted the core tenets of modern nationhood that inextricably linked citizenship and belonging to militarism and military service. Only a small number found they could not reconcile a peace witness with nationalist ideology and emigrated abroad; most embraced nationalism, renounced pacifism, and served in World War I. The impact on German Mennonite communities of Germany's defeat in 1918 was perhaps more significant than the war itself, since Germany's loss of land under the Treaty of Versailles greatly reduced the Mennonite population. For many Mennonites, loss of their German statehood brought into sharp relief the malleable nature of nation and nationalism. The treaty's negative effects may explain why in 1933 they generally welcomed Hitler, who peddled hatred of Versailles, Bolshevism, and Jews alongside Pan-German expansionism.

Race and Mennonites' agency in the Third Reich are central in Goossen's analysis. In particular, Mennonites in the conquered East became quintessential "ethnic Germans" whose impeccable Aryan lineage made them ideal settlers of Hitler's brutal racial empire. The author argues convincingly that they were not passive recipients of Nazi racism but its agents. He concludes that "without support from within the confession itself, Mennonitism would likely never have emerged as a scientific rubric of racial classification. Only through the efforts of pastors, genealogists, and aid workers did the notion of a 'racial church' . . . gain salience among

congregations in Germany and beyond, as well as among a wider non-Mennonite public" (145). In fact, "Mennonite activists' most successful strategy for courting Nazi patronage lay in the idea of the racial church," since Nazi researchers usually posited that Mennonites were more Aryan than the average German (131). In this discourse, Mennonites came to be seen as "anti-Jews"—racially superior, agrarian, productive, rooted—vis-à-vis Jews and their purported racial inferiority, degeneracy, and parasitic homelessness.

Close association with Aryanism and anti-Jewishness drew many Mennonites "into the machinery of an anti-Semitic and increasingly genocidal regime" (145). Individual Mennonites such as Otto Andres, lieutenant governor of Danzig-West Prussia, took official roles in Hitler's genocidal regime in the East. Some Mennonites joined Nazi murder squads. Here Goossen wrestles with the question of Mennonite identity, since many of these men's ties to Mennonitism were tenuous at best. He does not offer a clear definition of "Mennonite" or "Mennonitism" but concludes that contemporaries would have understood Mennonite soldiers, policemen, and presumably killers to be indeed Mennonites, which was "widely considered an ethnic as well as a religious appellation" (159). In contrast, there are no doubts about Benjamin Unruh's credentials. The official MCC representative in Germany since 1936, Unruh, who was fully aware of the mass murder of Jews, collaborated closely with Heinrich Himmler to benefit Mennonite congregations in the East.

Goossen's erudite analysis of Mennonites' complicity in Hitler's racism and genocide will, I hope, set new directions in research. The author highlights the need for further examination of the legacy of antisemitism in Mennonite faith and tradition. Privileging situational factors, he argues that Mennonite antisemitism was mainly the product of grave political, social, economic realities of the 20th century. Before that, although "everyday" antisemitic prejudices were common among German Mennonites, "they rarely indulged in extreme denunciations" (137). Stressing the toxic interplay of ideology, historical antisemitism, and situational factors in the Holocaust, other scholars have successfully challenged this approach. Goossen only alludes to the complex historical roots of Mennonites' antisemitism in his discussion of the Weierhof School in the German Palatinate. In 1936 the

Nazis transformed this school into an elite training academy because it was "Jew-free" (126); in 1890 the school's Mennonite board had expelled all Jewish students.

I hope that scholars will add to Goosen's important work with additional research and case studies that could illuminate, for instance, why Mennonite communities near Danzig assisted in constructing, maintaining, and operating Stutthof concentration camp, where some 60,000 inmates perished. Confronting this past is not easy—and "how present-day Mennonites will confront the legacies of their pasts [is] yet to be seen" (212).

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P. Travis Kroeker. *Messianic Political Theology and Diaspora Ethics: Essays in Exile*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.

A good many essay collections, especially those that gather material written over a span of decades, suffer from a profound disjointedness. Not so this volume. Quite the contrary, in fact, because as one reads through *Messianic Political Theology and Diaspora Ethics* a kind of organic coherence emerges. Taken together, the fifteen essays articulate a powerful, nuanced vision of a political messianism rooted primarily in the Pauline, Augustinian, and Anabaptist traditions in conversation with a wide range of philosophical and literary figures from Plato to Giorgio Agamben and Fyodor Dostoevsky to Wendell Berry.

At least one way to read these essays is through Kroeker's acknowledgement that his approach aligns with that of Anabaptist historian Robert Friedman, for whom "theology is properly 'existential theology'" (83). The precarious attempt to hold faith and life together in various ways arguably permeates all these essays. In the face of a world often enthralled with sovereignty, mastery, and possession, Kroeker suggests that we need "an account of spiritual causality, if I may put it this way, in the language of poetic, dramatic experience, a return to our personhood—which is

particular, limited, embodied, passing away, and yet inhabited, indeed inspired, by divine mystery" (244).

The essays are organized into three sections, the first of which illuminates the apocalyptic character of messianic political theology. As such, Kroeker's work can be located as part of what might be called "the apocalyptic turn" in contemporary theology. Significantly, it is not focused only on apocalyptic; while a number of essays make provocative use of biblical apocalyptic and its contemporary philosophical receptions, there is always the sense that this is only one tool among many and that all the tools should be used. Part of the reason for this is that the author's vision is grounded in the biblical text, particularly in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which urges us to use the "world 'as if not,' in a dispossessive manner that assesses the value of each particular thing or relation with reference to the passage of God in the world" (32). For Kroeker, this offers "a providential opportunity to rediscover the multiplicity of peoples and cultures as a divinely given good that saves human beings from idolatrous imposition of political and technological uniformity" (79).

Sections two and three embody this opportunity by taking up in turn "political theology and the radical reformation" and "messianism and diaspora ethics." Most of these essays excavate some aspect of the Mennonite tradition with which Kroeker identifies himself. John Howard Yoder figures prominently, noteworthy because of the renewed attention being paid to Yoder's long-term intentional pattern of sexual violence against women. Kroeker helpfully suggests that Yoder "will not be forgotten, as much for his prodigious failures as for his prodigious gifts, and we should continue to be instructed by both" (8). More helpful still, we get the beginnings of a valuable critique which contends that "Yoder's principle of voluntariety has too sanguine a vision of the human will and its ongoing conflicts with fallen desires" (157).

Even more important for Kroeker's project than Yoder is Dostoevsky, for whom existence is discerned within an apocalyptic vision of the slain Lamb that "dies to the pursuit of retributive justice and its alienating, isolating claims in order to be reborn into the suffering solidarity of human-divine community, where God's presence is lovingly served in all its created likenesses on the earth" (92-93). Eschewing grand philosophical narratives of

decline that actively avoid messianic political theology in favor of the self-emptying path taken by Dostoevsky's elder Zosima, Kroeker contends that "only one freed from the isolation of self-love can truly love others, and such freedom is made possible through spiritual rebirth in the image of Christ—conformity to the 'form of the servant' that builds up the human community through embodied deeds of humble love" (247).

Since there are far too many thickets and plains to explore here, each raising profound questions about the patient labor required to live and love in exile, perhaps the most appropriate way to conclude this review is to borrow a phrase from Augustine's *Confessions*: Take up and read; take up and read!

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Margaret Loewen Reimer. *Approaching the Divine: Signs and Symbols of the Christian Faith*. Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2017.

In *Approaching the Divine*, Margaret Loewen Reimer offers a short primer on some of the more common or curious Christian signs and symbols. The book is based on a column created in the late 1990s in the periodical now known as *Canadian Mennonite*. After a brief introduction reflecting on the role of symbols and signs, there are short entries with illustrations divided roughly according to the church year, and then more loosely connected entries on Signs and Tokens, and Art and Tradition. The volume concludes by reprinting a sermon on artistic imagination entitled "Biblical Magic" and an advent meditation named "The Virgin and the Unicorn."

Loewen Reimer states that "for people of faith, words and images suggesting the divine take on a sacred quality. These words and objects are not holy in themselves, but they are revered because they point beyond themselves to the source of all holiness" (13). She explains that "signs and symbols are outward, visible forms through which are revealed the invisible, inner meanings of our lives" (12), and notes that "a ritual is an act that can awaken us to new dimensions and realities" (53). This perspective invites the

reader to reflect and gives the book its title.

With an odd few exceptions, the descriptions in this collection are not especially novel for people from most liturgical traditions. What is interesting to consider, therefore, are the underlying assumptions about why this information is needed in a Mennonite context. The author says her goal is to interpret the symbols for Mennonite audiences. She notes that "religious faith is always forged within specific cultures and experiences" (70), so this book reveals her own cultural context and assumptions, whether or not Mennonite perspectives are specifically mentioned.

Having rejected much from liturgical traditions in our early history, Mennonites seem to be drawn to revisit the wealth of symbol and meaning across ecumenical lines and to incorporate them into worship. For example, in my own congregation's worship and in denominational resources (curricula, worship themes, etc.), growing attention is paid to a broader understanding of the liturgical calendar, to using symbols in worship (candles, liturgical colors, etc.), and to the Revised Common Lectionary for developing resources or for guiding preaching. When first published, the material in Loewen Roemer's book was an early contribution to this journey, offering to fill in some gaps the author perceived within Mennonite worship culture. It may still provide this bridging and complementary role for contemporary readers.

Most entries are offered without much commentary. Yet there are a few times when Loewen Reimer takes extra steps to make direct connections with her personal experience or to Mennonite practice. For instance, there is an entry on head coverings and another on charms and hexes. There are also topics where a more specific Anabaptist perspective is not identified or expanded upon, although it could have been fruitful. The entry about communion misses an opportunity to present a uniquely Anabaptist perspective or reflect on how Anabaptists view the practice compared to other traditions. I also found it curious that the author did not take the opportunity to expand upon *Tottensontag* (Eternity Sunday or Sunday of the Dead), since it is somewhat unusual ecumenically and seems to be a German protestant particularity that some Canadian Mennonite congregations commemorate in place of All Saints Day.

Finally, in "Biblical Magic," a sermon delivered in 1998, Loewen

Reimer draws upon her work on Mennonites and the artistic imagination. Here we find a deeper reflection and the foundational assumptions behind the invitation to approach the Divine through symbol. She offers a critique of Mennonite/Christian over-reliance on words and suspicion of images, which have the effect of flattening out the artistic elements of scripture. "We are used to thinking about God communicating with us through the spoken word, not through images or tangible, physical representations" (88). To counter this, she references the visual splendor of the temple and the wealth of metaphorical images in the Hebrew scriptures, and lays out a case for the arts and imagination in our encounters with the Bible and with culture. Importantly, the author sees this as a way to avoid an "impoverished literalism" (91).

Approaching the Divine will be helpful in its intended purpose of resourcing lay individuals in Mennonite congregations as they explore symbols and artistic expressions from the Christian tradition.

Michele Rae Rizoli, Pastor, Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ontario.

J. Denny Weaver. *God without Violence: Following a Nonviolent God in a Violent World*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016.

Considering that, as I write this, news of white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, is circulating widely, the timeliness of J. Denny Weaver's *God without Violence* is hardly debatable. In this popular version of his earlier books, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (2001, 2011) and *The Nonviolent God* (2013), Weaver traces evidence for divine nonviolence throughout the narrative of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection within the "conversation about the character and identity of God" spanning the Old and New Testaments (115, 128-29), addressing seemingly stubborn examples of divine violence within mainstream understandings of the atonement and the book of Revelation, and delineating the implications of divine nonviolence for Christian ethics and social justice. He frames his discussion with a

child's simple question— "A parent would never put their child to death on the cross, right?" (1, 197)—which he hopes will also resonate with adults who have left, or are skeptical of, the church and theology due to similar misgivings about "worship[ing] a God who would require the death of God's Son and who would kill thousands of people at one blow with an earthquake or a hurricane" (3).

Among the strengths of *God without Violence* is Weaver's wide definition of violence, encompassing everything from war, physical violence, and spousal and child abuse to "psychological harm" and the "structural" or "systemic violence of poverty and racism and sexism and patriarchy and more" (7, 57). This allows Weaver to move beyond the traditional nonresistance of his Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition to denounce both the myths of redemptive violence and redemptive suffering, following contextual theologians such as feminists Rebecca Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock, womanist Delores Williams, and Black liberationist James Cone (42-45).

Based on his claim that "[t]he God of Jesus does not kill and take life," but "is a giver of life and a restorer of life" (21), Weaver offers retellings of biblical narratives and concrete examples—biblical and contemporary— of creatively and nonviolently confronting racism, sexism, heterosexism, economic disparity, and the hegemonic violence of empire. In this way, he helpfully addresses many common concerns regarding divine violence and distills complex theological concepts—atonement, Christology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and biblical hermeneutics—into accessible language. Weaver's call for Christians to be honest regarding their biblical hermeneutics, which are not, in fact, as 'flat' as many Christians assume, is particularly well articulated (137, 142, 144). His largely implicit but deliberate avoidance of Christian supersessionist logic is also notable (5, 107, 115).

The atonement bookends Weaver's discussion, and he again makes the case for his "narrative Christus Victor" model of the atonement centered on Jesus' nonviolent life, ministry, and resurrection—here simply termed "nonviolent atonement" (31-33). While there is much to be lauded in Weaver's broadening of redemption from Christ's death alone to include the narratives of his life and resurrection, this view arguably underemphasizes the cross. In particular, Weaver distances God from the crucified Christ, thereby neglecting interpretations of the cross that place God—not only

God's Son—in solidarity with human suffering and unjust death. This creates a disconnect between Weaver's view and, for instance, Gustav Aulén's distinction between atonement as a "*continuous* Divine work" (carried out by God) within the *Christus Victor* model and as a "*discontinuous* Divine work" (carried out by Christ for God) within Anselm's and Abelard's models. Weaver instead presents the historic *Christus Victor* model as likewise 'discontinuous' (34).

Weaver also does not engage more contemporary and overtly nonviolent theologies of the cross as divine solidarity, such as the work of feminist-liberationist Dorothee Soelle, womanist JoAnne Marie Terrell, and Cone's recent *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. These omissions ultimately detract from the critique of redemptive suffering, as Weaver glosses over the lived experiences of suffering reflected in diverse feminist and liberationist perspectives on the cross (43-45, 80-81). His one passing mention of solidarity is puzzling both in its low Christology and its reliance on Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder rather than contextual theologies (179). Weaver also uses Yoder's work without acknowledging his legacy of sexual abuse, as is becoming common practice among scholars, especially those sensitive to women's experiences of violence and abuse.

Overall, while Weaver's latest offering takes important steps in making nonviolent biblical theology accessible to a wider audience, opportunities remain for developing a more thoroughly intersectional and contextual nonviolent theology.

Susanne Guenther Loewen, Ph.D., Co-pastor, Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Call for Proposals

MENNONITES, SERVICE, AND THE HUMANITARIAN IMPULSE: MCC AT 100

October 23-24, 2020
Winnipeg, Manitoba

In 1920 Mennonites from different ethnic and church backgrounds formed Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to respond collaboratively to the famine ravaging Mennonite communities in the Soviet Union (Ukraine). Since then MCC has grown to embrace disaster relief, development, and peacebuilding in more than 60 countries. One of the most influential Mennonite organizations of the 20th and 21st centuries, MCC has facilitated cooperation among various Mennonite groups, constructing a broad inter-Mennonite, Anabaptist identity, and bringing Mennonites into global ecumenical and interfaith partnerships.

This centennial conference invites proposals for papers examining MCC's past, present, and future, and reflecting on Mennonite response to the biblical call to love one's neighbor through practical acts of service. Proposals are welcome from various academic perspectives, including but not limited to anthropology, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, cultural studies, development studies, economics, history, political science, sociology, and theology.

The conference will be hosted by the Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, in collaboration with Canadian Mennonite University.

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: DECEMBER 1, 2019

Send proposals or questions to Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9, Canada. E-mail: r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca.

Limited research grants are available to help defray costs related to research in MCC's archives in Akron, Pennsylvania or at other MCC sites. Queries, with a brief two-paragraph description of the proposed research, should be sent to Alain Epp Weaver: aew@mcc.org. Requests for research grants will be assessed on an ongoing, rolling basis.

Call For Papers

THEOLOGY AND POLITICS/POLITICS AND THEOLOGY

While Mennonites have traditionally been reticent to participate in state politics, they have long been involved in community organization and governance at congregational, local, and even municipal levels. More recently, Mennonites have gained prominence in national politics, including current Cabinet ministers in Canada and the former Finance Minister of Paraguay. Recent years have also seen the publication of works in Political Theology by several Mennonite authors. In an apparently post-Schleitheim era, it is worth reconsidering the relationships between Mennonites, Theology, and Politics.

To advance this conversation, *The Conrad Grebel Review* (CGR) invites submissions for a special theme issue from scholars in theology, history, political science, philosophy, and other fields, as well as from practitioners, advocates, political figures, journalists, and public servants. Submissions may take the form of articles or reflections, and could focus on such areas as the following (this list is not exhaustive or prescriptive):

- Role of advocacy
- Political theology
- Alternative politics/ecclesiology
- Ecclesial polity/politics
- Contextual considerations
- Opportunities and challenges
- Perspectives on Mennonites and/in government.

LENGTH: 5000-7500 WORDS
SUBMISSIONS WILL BE RECEIVED AS OF JANUARY 4, 2019.

For more details:
Derek Suderman, CGR Editor, dsuderman@uwaterloo.ca.

To view CGR's general requirements (document format, citation style, etc.):
https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/submissions.

Send submissions to:
Stephen A. Jones, CGR Managing Editor, cgredit@uwaterloo.ca

C a l l   f o r   P a p e r s

LAND

Despite the Mennonite tradition's centuries-long association with agriculture, "land" has not received a great deal of attention within Mennonite academic discourse. *The Conrad Grebel Review* (CGR) welcomes original article submissions from biblical, theological, historical, cultural, literary, or ethical perspectives on the many-faceted theme of land.

Possible topics include—but are not limited to—the following:

- Perspectives on land
- Challenges of "creation care" and/or "stewardship"
- Perspectives on environmentalism
- Historical and/or contemporary interactions with Indigenous peoples (relationships, treaties, ownership)
- Consideration of the "Doctrine of Discovery"
- Depictions of land and people
- Ethical considerations regarding land use
- Migration (forced, voluntary) and exile.

LENGTH: 5000-7500 WORDS
SUBMISSIONS WILL BE RECEIVED AS OF JANUARY 4, 2019.

For more details:
Derek Suderman, CGR Editor (dsuderman@uwaterloo.ca)

Send submissions to:
Stephen A. Jones, CGR Managing Editor (cgredit@uwaterloo.ca)