BECHTEL LECTURES 2005

Mennonites: A Peace Church in Conversation

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LECTURE ONE

The Peace Church: Dialogue and Diversity in the Ecumenical Movement

Plurality and Diversity in Christian Belief

Since the sixteenth century Reformation, all the churches in the Protestant stream, are characterized by plurality. What began as a reform movement within the medieval Roman Catholic church soon became a movement of counter churches when it was confronted with severe resistance. In the end this resulted in a clear separation from that traditional church and led to totally new church structures. And, as is the case in almost all renewal movements, the Protestant Reformation fell into a plurality of opinions, once the common opposition against the ruling force no longer served as a unifying principle. The Reformation era has become a symbol for the challenge of unity within the Christian community.[1]

One could say that in the beginning the common denominator among all the reformers – from Luther to Calvin, from Zwingli to Menno – was their joint opposition to Roman Catholicism. They all agreed that the deplorable state of affairs in the church could not be ameliorated unless there was a clear, new, and concentrated reflection on the gospel itself. Therefore, they stressed the principle of *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone. Scripture alone could justify any reform. Scripture should be the ultimate authority, not tradition, not an office, not a hierarchy. This conviction was itself regulated by some other well-known exclusive articles: *solus Christus*, *sola fide*, and *sola gratia*. Only by Christ, only by grace through faith, are we justified before and by God. It is this common basis that unites the various positions among the reformers. The Anabaptists and later Mennonites never neglected these principles and thus are part of the Protestant family.

However, the principle of *sola scriptura* did not itself guarantee unity among the Reformation's different groups. On the contrary, that principle became the origin and reason for a vast plurality. As diverse and manifold as the texts of the Old and New Testament are, so diverse became the divergent positions within the Reformation. There was disagreement on baptism, the interpretation of the Lord's Supper, the right relation of church and state, the right way of proclamation, the meaning of discipleship, and many more issues. Naturally all the reformers tried to prove by Scripture that their own position was "biblical" and therefore true. And they all claimed the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only valid source of revelation.

Here it became more obvious than ever that the Bible does not consist of one book but is a whole library and plurality of witnesses to one truth. Consequently, various interpretations of the different theological topics were developed legitimately on the basis of the regulative principles[2] of the Reformation. It also became clear that in most cases several interpretations for conducting a Christian life or for shaping the Christian church were deducible from one single witness in Scripture. Scripture itself allows and calls for different interpretations, it seems.

The question then arises, Is this is an obstacle for the church community? Is this precisely what the Roman Catholic church had warned so urgently against, and still does warn against? As faithful Protestants, we need to ask what the Bible itself tells us about plurality and diversity.

Plurality and Diversity in the Bible

When we deal with diversity, we shall not reduce our observations to hermeneutical questions, but instead start where the reformers started: with the content of the Bible and the biblical stories. When taking a closer look at the texts, we realize a plurality of opinions are manifested in Scripture. The early Christians were far from united in their interpretations of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In general, we want to ask if it will ever be possible to come to an unmistakable unity within the church, if the church's very being is grounded in a revelation that testifies to a truth always beyond space and time, always more than all our imaginations, and always beyond our capability to express it fully in language.

Think of the discussions the disciples had, e.g., the Apostles' council in Acts 15, where Peter and Paul had different opinions about the mission of the

church. During this dialogue at the council of Jerusalem, they did not convince each other fully, yet they still came to some agreement. Both interpretations were accepted in their validity and without giving up the unity of the church. The gospel in Jerusalem is proclaimed in a different way than in the Hellenistic world – within the one church. The unity is clearly demonstrated by the common collection for the congregation in Jerusalem. One is inclined to think the first contextual theologies within Christianity started here, at the church's very beginning.

Is unity one of the primary commandments for Christians? The council at Jerusalem indicates that unity within the ecclesia seems necessary but is obviously not understood as uniformity. We don't see how Paul is convinced by Peter or vice versa. No one submits to the opinion of the other. It does not appear that one of them can claim the absolutely true interpretation of the revelation over against the other. Rather, we see a wisdom among the Apostles that is far more differentiated. Unity among the early Christians is preserved without submission or the necessity for either side to give up their argument, because both interpretations are legitimately grounded in the gospel message of Jesus itself. Diversity within this unity is obviously not a problem.

We see the same wisdom in the process of building the canon of Scripture. It was possible to include three different gospels plus John, and to have divergent letters from Paul and the others, and so on. Diversity is clearly promoted as a possibility within unity.

Let us take a closer look now at some concrete statements about plurality. I will do this by using an illustration from my own context at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. In the Ecumenical Institute and Student Hall, where I live and teach, there is a nice chapel where we worship as an ecumenical community, students from Orthodox, Roman Catholic and different Protestant denominations, coming from different countries and cultural backgrounds, plus a Muslim from Senegal and one from Iraq. The chapel is a simple room, but it has two stained glass windows on opposite sides. On the west side you find an image of the Tower of Babel, on the east side you can see an illustration of Pentecost. These biblical stories were chosen deliberately. What do they tell us about diversity and the formation of an ecumenical community?

The window on the west side symbolizes the Tower that is being erected for one sole purpose: "Let us make a name for ourselves." How? "(And the

Lord said:) Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Gen. 11:6). The offence against the will of God was to collect power by creating uniformity. In Germany this reminds us of the darkest times of the Nazi regime, when all parts of society were brought into one ideological line (*Gleichschaltung*): one people, one nation, one Führer.

[Slide of west side chapel window was shown here.]

In order to stop the "uniformers," God confused their language and "scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth. . . ." In the earliest beginning there was a multitude of plurality; in creation plurality is the original state, not uniformity. Uniformity is artificial, man-made. It is not according to the will of God. Diversity is. The other window on the east side tells the Pentecost story of Acts 2. It is composed as a counter story to Babel. As the people gathered, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The effect was that "they began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability." The crowd was "bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each." What follows is a long list of different nationalities who "hear them speaking about God's deeds of power" in their own languages.

[Slide of east side chapel window was shown here.]

What does this tell us about diversity and unity? On the one hand, the Spirit does not destroy the diversity of languages or the plurality. On the other, the Spirit enables the people to understand each other, to communicate, to dialogue within this diversity. We celebrate this fact as the birth of the church: among the many nations with all different languages, cultural backgrounds, and mentalities, the Spirit makes it possible to dialogue. The goal in this gathering of the church is not to gain power by uniforming, but to testify to "God's deeds of power." Wherever God – the God of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, the Father of Jesus Christ, born by Mary, the giver of the Holy Spirit – is worshipped and glorified, the Spirit creates a community of dialogue and understanding, a hermeneutical community, a diverse community of mutuality. It is not one single person who finds the right words; everyone in his or her

native language is able to listen and witness to this truth, the truth revealed in Jesus Christ. This is the miracle performed by the Holy Spirit.

For me this is the most wonderful illustration of ecumenism. The different denominations and church traditions hear each other in their own (native) denominational language containing special beliefs and different characters, yet they understand each other. Why? Because their common goal is doxology, the glorification of the triune God and his deeds of power, as at Pentecost. The Spirit then creates a new community, for which diversity seems to be one of the preconditions.

Unio *or* Communio?

This image of unity in diversity is also found in Jesus' high-priestly prayer for his disciples in John 17 (a classic text for the modern ecumenical movement): "that they all may be one. As you, Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent us." Father and Son are one but they are different, differentiated persons of the one Trinity.[3] Only in relation to each other do they become who they are: the Father is the Father of the Son Jesus Christ, the Son is the Son of the God of Abraham and Sarah, of Israel, the God of the promises. The persons are different, and have to be different, because only in their diversity can they relate to each other and be for each other what they truly are. Again, to be one does not simply mean to be identical, but to be in relation with each other, in a community that does not neutralize diversity.[4]

We hear Jesus praying that this unity in diversity should also be true of his followers. He does not pray this for either their sake or his own, but for the sake of credibility: "so that the world may believe." In his prayer, Jesus makes the trinitarian community the model for the community of believers. Therefore it has also become the model for the community of churches in ecumenism. In this way the community of churches itself becomes a witness to the community of the Trinity. This implies that we, the church, will bear a credible witness in the world when we accept each other's participating in the one community, a community that respects diversity. In Latin this is called *communio* over against *unio*.[5]

More images of interpreting community in diversity can be found in the New Testament. The most vivid image is probably in 1 Cor. 12, where Paul

describes the one body with various parts and the one Spirit who produces many gifts (cf. also Rom. 12).

From all this we can now summarize. Plurality or diversity is not only a historical phenomenon within the church since the Reformation era, or only a concept arising from various interpretations of Scripture. It is also based in genuine theological reasoning. If this is so, then all our reflections on diversity within the one Christian community of churches must now concentrate on the quality of the relations among the members.

Mennonites and Ecumenism

The model of unity in diversity outlined above is exactly the ecclesiological model that the WCC has followed since its beginning. Yet the role of Mennonites in the modern ecumenical movement can only be described in a wide range that is as diverse as Mennonites themselves are. This is somewhat surprising, since in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition the community approach to ecclesiology has always been the predominant model, although not always reflected in theological terms.

Mennonites have given important impulses to the ecumenical movement, helping to shape it as well as skeptical observers who preferred to stand aside. At the same time the ecumenical movement has always challenged Mennonites to explain their "native language" of theology and ethics, and to make these insights available to the wider community of churches. Large portions of explicit Mennonite theology would not have been produced if it weren't for this ecumenical challenge, since Mennonites have tended to concentrate more on their congregational life in their local community. It is fair to say that if not for these ecumenical encounters and dialogues, a lot of twentieth-century Mennonite theological reflection would simply not exist.

So, these encounters have had at least a twofold effect. They have contributed to others' knowledge about theological interpretations of the gospel from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective; and they have contributed immensely to our self-assurance about who we are as a Mennonite community of believers, why we are different from others (or at least how we ourselves think Mennonites should be). Through ecumenical encounter and dialogue our genuine denominational identity and profile has not been relativized but sharpened.[6]

In what follows I will give a few examples of Mennonite ecumenical engagement that illustrate this thesis. In order not to sound too optimistic or one-sided, we should keep in mind that big segments of Mennonites have rejected the challenge of ecumenical dialogue and of becoming part of this community in diversity. The reasons are manifold: a fear of becoming monopolized by mainstream churches; a concern to have to follow the agenda of others; a general skepticism toward any kind of institutionalized forms of church communions, or the preservation of the memory that Mennonites are a small minority persecuted by other Christian denominations. By no means should we underestimate these concerns, and it is important to keep this story alive since it shows past attempts at unification that closely followed the Tower of Babel model.[7]

The Beginning of the Ecumenical Movement

The challenge starts with the attempt to classify Mennonites in the denominational families of Christian traditions. In opposition to Orthodox Churches we belong to the western stream of church history; in opposition to the Roman Catholic stream we belong to the churches of the Reformation; in opposition to all state churches (including Lutheran and Reformed) we belong to the category of free churches. If we say that adult baptism is the main criterion for differentiation, then – together with the Baptists – we would be part of the Believers Church tradition. If we choose the nonviolent stance as our key identity marker, we find ourselves together with some other historic peace churches such as the Friends (Quakers) and the Church of the Brethren. The challenging question comes back to us: Who are we? What is most important and identity-shaping to us?

Members of the Free Church traditions were instrumental in building the early ecumenical structures. The Evangelical Alliance (1846) and the World Student Christian Federation (1895) are two examples. In the founding of the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association, the Believers Church influence can be traced. The peace conferences in Den Haag (1899 and 1907) asked the Quaker J. Allen Baker to foster friendly relations between the churches in England and in Germany, out of which connection grew the foundation of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the churches (1914). In the same

year, Henry Hodkin, a Quaker, and Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, a pacifist Lutheran from Germany, started preparations to inaugurate an International Fellowship of Reconciliation (1919).

The strongest motivation for the ecumenical movement arose from the mission experience. To some church leaders it just didn't make sense to export the sixteenth-century church divisions of Europe into Africa, Latin America, or Asia. The second strong motivation came from the terrible experience of World War I. Where were the churches in this orgy of killing? Where was the Christian voice? When the Second World War started, the call became even more urgent: Where is a joint word of the churches that the world cannot ignore?[8]

The Founding of the World Council of Churches, 1948

In 1948 the World Council of Churches was founded in Amsterdam. Its basis was formulated then and is still valid today: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches, which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior *according to the scriptures* and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling *to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit*."[9] (The amendments in italics were added in 1961, when some Orthodox Churches joined the WCC.) Among the founding members were the Algemene Doopsgezinde Societeit (Association of Mennonites in the Netherlands) and the Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden (Union of German Mennonite congregations).[10] In the list of delegates was John David Unruh (USA), representing the Mennonite Central Committee.

After the Second World War, the churches of the WCC jointly condemned the war as an act against the will of God and also confessed their failure.[11] There was a growing openness to the Mennonite peace witness as well as that of other peace churches. Other components of the Mennonite identity were neglected, partly because Mennonites expressed themselves most strongly in the field of peace ethics and peace theology, and less so in the ecumenical discussions of other topics.

In 1949 the General Secretary of the WCC, Willem A. Visser't Hooft, officially asked the historic peace churches and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation to explain their pacifist position to the ecumenical community. The answer was presented in 1951 with the declaration, War is Contrary to

the Will of God.[12] This declaration contained no less than four separate statements of the four participating groups, something that led to a divided reaction on the WCC side. How could the WCC formulate an unambiguous declaration, if even the peace churches couldn't come up with a joint statement? A second response was prepared: "This conference recognizes that the challenge (to produce a unified statement) of the World Council of Churches is an opportunity which should not be lost. . ." (Netherlands 1952). This resulted in the 1953 document, Peace is the Will of God.[13]

I relate these details to illustrate how the challenge of the ecumenical community brought the historic peace churches to a common, precise, and theologically grounded statement. Without this challenge, Mennonites would probably not have been looking for such an opportunity – at least European Mennonites would have failed to do so. The common declaration of 1953 tried to refute the general reproaches against pacifism. It takes up the relevant sentence of the first WCC Assembly in Amsterdam and gives christological reasons for it: "War is incompatible with the teaching and example of Christ." It also adopts the ecclesiologically founded formulation of the previous ecumenical Oxford Conference on Life and Work (1937),[14] wherein the churches had proclaimed the condemnation of war unconditionally and unrestrictedly, since the *una sancta*, the one and holy community of churches, transcends any social separation in the world. It was affirmed that belonging to the worldwide body of Christ is stronger than any commitment to a nation state or ethnic group. The declaration of the historic peace churches explains that these are exactly the arguments against warfare.

Of course, underlying differences became visible in how the minority churches argued from their perspective. They defined themselves in opposition to "the world" yet possessed a self-understanding as a church that is aware of its responsibility in the world and tries to fulfil it by giving a living example of discipleship. Mennonites opposed those mainline churches that did not give up the medieval model of the *corpus christianum* (the unity of Empire and Church) and that therefore did not really renounce the just war theory. In doubtful cases, they claimed, for Christians there can't be a decision about the lesser of two evils. In those cases readiness to suffer would be the true church's unequivocal witness. By this, Mennonites made their distinct emphasis clear as part of the larger body of Christ, the community of churches.

Puidoux Conferences, 1955-73

A series of joint consultations followed, called the Puidoux Conferences, named after the town where the first meeting took place.[15] These dialogues are the first attempts to take up a conversation between the churches of the "left wing" of the Reformation and the "territory churches," a conversation impossible for centuries due to persecution and condemnations on both sides. The initiative arose from a meeting of representatives from the historic peace churches and from the WCC staff in Geneva (including the later General Secretary, Philip Potter).

There have been four major meetings: Puidoux, Czechoslovakia (1955); Iserlohn, Germany (1957); Bièvres, France (1960), Oud Poulgeest, Netherlands (1962). The topics tell us about what was at stake. The overall theme, "The Lordship of Christ over Church and State," marks one of the crucial questions in these debates. If Christ is Lord, he is Lord over Church and State. For Mennonites, this implied that the church's first duty is to confess this fact and to live in discipleship. That is the mission of the church in and to the world. It means that the church will not assume power to wage war, since Christ is Lord, not the church. For the opposite side, this confession of the Lordship of Christ led to the basic conclusion that there is no power that is not granted by this Lord. Christ rules the world through worldly institutions, which might in the end include the possibility of waging war in order to defend the innocent and to fight the evildoers.

Especially in Germany these conferences had a remarkable impact on discussions of peace ethics. It was people from the confessing church that had resisted the Nazi regime who were so interested and involved (e.g., Martin Niemöller, Ernst Wolf, and others) and who later became leading figures in a nationwide peace movement, long before the German Mennonites gained recognition in society. On the Mennonite side John Howard Yoder is probably the best known representative. At the first Puidoux meeting, he was still a doctoral student in Basel. My guess is that Yoder wouldn't have developed his representative theology from a Mennonite perspective without these early years in ecumenical formation.

The presentations made during these conferences are worth reading, since many of the arguments are still valid for current debates in peace ethics. It became clear that the lasting differences follow from different understandings of what the church is, the ecclesiologies. Is it a state church,

a parallel institution to the government, sharing in political power? Or is it an alternative community model that seeks to provide an example of what it means to live according to the kingdom of God? If the first model seems far too worldly, the second is probably far too idealistic. This is a common ecumenical insight from a later perspective.

Today we are more realistic on both sides. Without having lost the idealistic vision of a kingdom theology, we reflect together on the nature and the purpose of the church.[16] Maybe this will lead us closer to each other in our reflections on war, peace, and justice.[17] But the Historic Peace Churches have without a doubt been very influential on other churches in the ecumenical family and on the WCC's general policy, because there were Mennonites ready to share, testify, and struggle with other traditions, and to get involved in the tough questions.

The Assemblies

In the history of WCC Assemblies we can also trace the voice of Mennonites. The third Assembly in New Delhi 1961 explicitly asked for consultations between pacifist and non-pacifist traditions. One of the most important and influential conferences was the 1966 conference on Church and Society. Many see this event as a direct link to the Puidoux Conferences. Together with churches from the South, communities like the Mennonites argued at the fourth Assembly in Uppsala (1968) that "orthopraxis" for the fellowship of churches is at least as important as orthodoxy. A study on nonviolent methods was initiated in which the peace churches participated enthusiastically.[18] In Nairobi (1975) the Program to Combat Militarism was initiated. Vancouver (1983) marks the start of the Conciliar Process on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation,[19] which reached its climax in the Seoul world convocation (1990).

The Lima Process on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1980-92)

So far almost all of the contributions from Mennonites were limited to peace ethics, representing the Christian pacifist tradition. In the Lima Process on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry we finally see theological statements on other issues, imbedded in an ecclesiology from a distinct Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. Since the German and the Dutch Mennonites are full member churches of the WCC, they were asked to present official responses to the ecumenical declarations on baptism, eucharist, and ministry.[20]

Baptism, Mennonites explained, is understood as a confession to visible discipleship (*Nachfolge*). It is the potential of the individual to react to God's primary grace. In the context of the community of believers this leads to a mutual responsibility. The Eucharist – the Lord's Supper – is a joint confession of Jesus Christ, the one who invites us to this table. Therefore, the Lord's Supper has a power to transcend limits and borderlines, and enlarges the community of believers to the worldwide Church. The Mennonite understanding of ministry does not include a representation of Christ, but is more concerned about the participation of the whole community, a consequence of the priesthood of all believers. Different charismata allow for different performances in ministry, which must never result in the building of hierarchies. For Mennonites the apostolicity of the church does not depend on the uninterrupted succession of ministries. Apostolicity is not described in terms of ministry. The continuity of the church, its apostolicity, is granted by the message of the gospel itself.

The experience of the local church is the primary context for these statements, in contrast to some other church traditions. This might be one reason dogmatics and ethics seem to be so closely knit together in Mennonite reasoning. In the Lima Responses the WCC's Mennonite member churches confirmed their commitment to the ecumenical community, and on that basis formulated critical questions about some institutional forms of ecumenism.

Again, we can observe how the ecumenical community presents a motivation to reflect carefully and theologically on what we believe and how we argue from a distinct Mennonite perspective. Therefore, these statements not only become a contribution to the wider church but help reassure ourselves about our own identity. This is especially crucial for a tradition like ours, which does not know any authoritative teachings besides Scripture alone, has a very loose relation to written confessions, and is less concerned about dogmatic traditions. It is thus crucial to be engaged in ecumenical dialogue in order to have a permanent regulator at hand, the ecumenical community of all believers. The WCC's Mennonite member churches take care that the wisdom of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition – our story, our perspective, our interpretation of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – is heard and shared in the ecumenical family of churches. In doing so we help ensure that this story is not lost in the wisdom of the worldwide body of Christ.

The Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-10

The most recent development in this history of Mennonite involvement in the WCC is the initiation of a "Decade to Overcome Violence. Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010." It was adopted by the seventh WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998, after the German Mennonites had initiated a move to begin the twenty-first century among the ecumenical fellowship of churches in this manner. It is an attempt to move closer to a fellowship of peace churches, to fulfil our ministry of reconciliation as churches in order to uncover the complicity of the churches and our theologies in violence, and to move peace theology and peace building from the periphery to the center of the life of the churches.[21]

The Decade has become a benchmark for future programmatic work within the WCC. It is encouraging to see churches around the world getting engaged in peace work and beginning to reflect their theologies from that perspective – churches for which it is new to think of nonviolence as a key identity marker of the nature of the church. And again, as in the WCC's early years, the Central Committee has asked the Peace Churches to take the lead and contribute to the search for nonviolent ways to overcome violence, since it is such a threat to many Christians and non-Christians around the world. The Historic Peace Churches have not only participated individually in regional and international efforts of the Decade, but have started a new reflection process among themselves to determine what shape a contemporary peace theology and peace church should have. This started in 2001 in Europe (Bienenberg)[22] and continued in 2004 in Africa (Nairobi)[23]; plans are underway for 2007 in Asia (Indonesia).

Mennonites in the WCC have a prophetic ministry, as other traditions bring in their special wisdom and interpretation, their stories. We remind each other of the richness within the church, because we believe that our insights belong not just to ourselves but are gifts to be shared with all. Mennonites generally still tend to limit their ecumenical involvement to the local context. But we have seen several bilateral dialogues at the international level, most recently with the Roman Catholic Church and now starting with the Lutheran World Federation. We are happy to see that the Mennonite Community in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has, in the meantime, become a full member of the WCC, a development that has led to fruitful collaborations as an African Mennonite identity is brought into the community.

The Peace Church is Ecumenical

For some Mennonites, the WCC has been a controversial instrument. Many evangelicals criticized the WCC for being too political, or they accused other member churches of not being real Christians. I have never really understood why some Mennonite groups are adopting this criticism. If we call ourselves a church of believers, if we emphasize ethics, lifestyle, and discipleship so much, and if we consider ourselves a peace church, Mennonites should be in the front row of the ecumenical movement. Let me explore this briefly.

During the Decade to Overcome Violence we are learning about the many different forms of violence. It seems that a broad understanding of violence is necessary in order to grasp its reality. My own definition has been shaped through many discussions in this international arena. Violence is a physical or psychical act of denial, injury, or destruction of (a) the personhood of another person, his will, his integrity and dignity – his likeness in the image of God; and (b) right relations – of God's relation to humankind through creation, reconciliation, and perfection, through which right relations between persons is made possible. Such a definition shows that we need to understand violence more broadly than simply as physical offences or killing. Violence is first and foremost a term of relation. Every attempt to exercise power unilaterally is violence. In order to overcome it, the establishing, sustaining, and assuring of right relations is key to the peace church witness.

Therefore, it is not enough to be against war or to be non-resistant. Being a peace church includes longing for, and engaging in, the building of right relations with the other in order to minimize – maybe even overcome – violence. This is what the story of Jesus is all about. This is what *Nachfolge*, discipleship, means. "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent us": we come back to John 17 and right relations. A trinitarian foundation of the peace church ecclesiology is helpful in order to argue more fully, wholistically, and coherently in favor of a church that is a model for right relations, a messianic community without discrimination as to gender, race, age, or other categories.

This means that if we are participating in the trinitarian relation, then the boundaries of the peace church cannot be drawn around either the local congregation or the Mennonite family. Today the peace church cannot live in the ghetto. It is ecumenical or it is not a peace church! Ecumenism is about building and sustaining right relations – nothing more, nothing less – so that

the world may believe. If our mission is to be credible, we need to live this unity in diversity. Active partaking in the ecumenical *communio* of churches is key to this witness.

I invite you, Mennonites in Canada and North America, to consider joining us German, Dutch, and Congolese Mennonites in the responsibility of sharing, witnessing, and arguing from a distinctively Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective – the perspective of our story – within the larger community of churches. They deserve it, and we need it!

Notes

[1] There had been numerous other schisms before in the history of the church, but the Reformation marks the most severe one within Western tradition.

[2] I use this term in the sense George A. Lindbeck proposes in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

[3] Among the many recent publications on trinitarian theology, see Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997 [1990]).

[4] None of the Anabaptists denied the confession of the triune God.

[5] This is developed in more detail in Fernando Enns, *Friedenskirche in der Ökumene* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003). English translation in preparation.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] For illustration, see John S. Oyer and Robert S. Kreider, *Mirror of the Martyrs* (Good Books, 1990).

[8] Cf. *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 3 vol. (Geneva: WCC, 2004).

[9] Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Basis: Its History and Significance" in *EcRev* 37 (1985).

[10] The list of official delegates includes the Mennonites Dr. Willem Frederik Goldermann from the Netherlands and Dr. Wilhelm Ernst Crous from Germany.

[11] Cf. *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, 1948, ed. W.A.Visser 't Hooft (SCM Press, 1949).

[12] Cf. Donald F. Durnbaugh (ed.), *On Earth Peace, Discussions on War / Peace Issues between Friends, Mennonites, Brethren and European Churches 1935-1975* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1978).

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *The Churches Survey their Task: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community, and State* (London, 1937).

[15] Cf. Durnbaugh, *On Earth Peace*.

[16] Cf. *The Nature and the Purpose of the Church*. Faith and Order Paper 181 (Geneva: WCC, 1998).

[17] See also the study process on Ecclesiology and Ethics. *Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation and the Nature of the Church*, Thomas F. Best and Martin Robra (eds.) (Geneva: WCC, 1997).

[18] Cardiff, Wales (1972).
[19] Richard J. Burkholder, *Mennonites in Ecumenical Dialogue on Peace and Justice*. Mennonite Central Committee, Occasional Papers No.7, 1988.
[20] United German Mennonite Congregations, in *Churches Respond to BEM*, Vol.VI, Faith and Order Paper 144 (Geneva: WCC, 1988), 123-29.
[21] Cf. www.wcc-coe.org/dov.
[22] Cf. Fernando Enns, Scott Holland, Ann K. Riggs (eds.), *Seeking Cultures of Peace: A Peace Church Conversation* (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2004).
[23] A documentary DVD and book are in preparation.