Nonviolence and Shabbat

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It is wonderful to greet this posthumous publication of John Howard Yoder's Warsaw lectures on nonviolence. Thanks to the good efforts of Paul Martens, Matthew Porter, and Myles Werntz, and of Baylor University Press, Yoder's sharply drawn and clearly written history of nonviolent social action and resistance is now ready at hand for research, teaching, and social action. Several years ago, Michael Cartwright asked me to help him publish another posthumous work of Yoder's, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited.*[1] It is therefore all the more meaningful for me to see this new work and to be asked to offer a response to it.

After each chapter of *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* I appended brief commentaries on what I called "the wonders and the burdens" of Yoder's approach to Judaism.[2] By "wonders" I referred to Yoder's pioneering a non-supersessionist Christian theology of both ancient Israel's covenant with God and rabbinic Judaism's continuing place in that covenant. By "burdens" I meant his unintended perpetuation of another kind of non-non-supersessionism. I claimed that, by seeking to identify the "essence" of Israelite and rabbinic religion – and to critique alternative forms of Jewish and Christian religion – he introduced another form of replacement theology: replacing the historically evolving character of Jewish religion with one of his own conception (no matter how ingenious and generous).

In two subsequent writings on Yoder, I explained that I was attracted to the aspects of his work that were consistent with the Yoder I saw through the writings of Stanley Hauerwas.[3] This was a Yoder whose commitments – his "pacifism," his non-supersessionism, and the many other commitments he also illustrates in *Nonviolence – a Brief History* – were another name for how he would act in the direct presence of the Jesus Christ of the Gospel. These commitments reflected what I saw as consistent alternatives to "modernist" forms of Christian religion that Hauerwas criticized in ways paralleling my own criticisms of modernist Judaism and "liberal" or "conservative" efforts to identify such a religion with a set of conceptually defined principles,

dogmas, or essences. I considered these efforts misguided because they sought to identify the divine presence or divine Word with a humanly constructed set of concepts.[4] I didn't mind the use of human conceptions, only any effort to mistake them for clear-and-distinct representations of "ultimate," "universal," "infallible" or – in this way – "divine" truths, values, or imperatives. I learned from Hauerwas – and later from Cartwright and then a good number of Mennonite theologians – to turn to Yoder as a reliable critic of such representations and a reliable resource for alternatives. I commented on the "wonders" of his writing when I found him reliable in this way (most of the time) and on the "burdens" of his writing when I did not.

My review of Yoder's *Nonviolence – A Brief History* will extend and, I hope, refine my previous commentaries. This time, rather than survey wonders and burdens, I want to focus on one of the major strengths I see in this volume and one area of concern. I will laud his example of how to act, socially and politically, in the presence of God. I will express concerns about his tendencies to let conceptual constructions (like "nonviolence" and "pacifism") stand in as representatives of that presence, and I will explain how my previously expressed thoughts about "Yoder and the Jews" were meant as tests of his freedom (or not) from modernism, *not* about "what's good for the Jews."[5] I shall then express new concerns about the non-nonviolence of conceptual universalism, whether or not one sees literal bloodshed. I shall conclude by reflecting on the difference between acting "nonviolently" and acting "for God's sake," in *imitatio Christi*, or "for the sake of *shabbat* [the Sabbath]."

A Major Strength and an Area of Concern

Yoder offers a prototype for what I term "following after God" (His presence and Word) in a way that includes disciplined reasoning as a matter of course, while avoiding both liberal and conservative types of "modernism." (By "liberal modernism," I mean the efforts of humanists to tell us, once and for all, what is good and true for all humanity; by "conservative modernism," I mean the efforts of religious traditionalists to tell us, once and for all, what God really wants all of us to do and to believe.) Yoder offers a prototype for apprehending God's presence and in some way comprehending His will

for us, especially in regard to our dealings with society and world. I am attracted to the unapologetic character of Yoder's commitment to following after God: his presuming that God's directing hand lies directly upon us, that the consequence is immediate for our public and private lives, and that the discipline of living after the will and manner of God is a discipline of reasoning. For me, the impact of Yoder's words is as if he declared "of course we include reasoning, scientific reasoning too, for how else would God have us clarify our perceptions of who suffers or who causes what suffering, of what aid or witness or resistance we have to offer, and of what consequences follow our actions?" I read Yoder, moreover, because he seeks God's presence and Word in scripture and also in direct encounter,[6] and because he recognizes that neither politics nor science "scares" the divine word away (as it may seem to those concerned to protect the "inner" life from the "outer" one).

But I also have concerns about Yoder's seeming lack of worry about the divisive force of efforts to discern the divine will and Word by way of conceptually distinct definitions and principles. Without risk of idolatry, these cannot substitute for the divine or act as its direct agents. If they are adopted this way, the problem is not simply that some pious folks will declare them "idols" but that, over enough time, their employment will establish patterns of actions and institutions that will kill – that is, damage the human psyche and spirit, encourage totalizing thinking and building, and leave in their wake broken relations, social structures, and human bodies. This fear is the source of my only critical comment about Yoder's writing and thus the basis for my offering something other than a word of thanks and a "carry on!"

The reader can rightfully expect me to explain the basis of my fear, the evidence I have for imagining that defining one's religious ethics clearly is a bad and not a good thing. Without such evidence, my claims about "broken relations . . . and bodies" would seem hyperbolic at best and my critical comments a form of crying wolf. But I do not have space here to provide such evidence and also attend in detail to this new Yoder volume. Instead, I shall outline the main assumptions underlying my fear and the main sources of evidence, drawing on the vast literature of postmodernism, along with "post-liberal" or scripturally grounded forms of Christian and Jewish postmodern-like criticism, and recollections of 20th-century secular

totalitarianism:

- The vast projects of modern western civilization – Enlightenment, capitalism, nationalism, colonialism – are inseparable from a particular epistemological conviction: that the human mind has the power to perceive universal truths that can be articulated in clear-and-distinct propositions and that apply to all human beings regardless of context.

- This epistemology warrants an ethical conviction as well: that a universal truth corresponds to a universal moral imperative.

- Each of these epistemological and ethical claims both asserts *and* denies something about all humanity. So, if it is asserted that "all humans do and ought to belong to a nation," then it is also implied that those who do not belong to a nation are either non-human or else live their lives in ways that contradict the moral and natural orders.[7]

- To assert these universal truths is to assert the falsity of contradictory truth claims. Efforts to embody these truths are, by implication even when not by intention, efforts to inhibit the embodiment of contradictory truths. That is, the vast projects of modernity operate according to a zero-sum game.

- This modern epistemology and ethics integrates heterogeneous assumptions and tendencies from certain (not all!) ancient Greco-Roman and Biblical intellectual and moral traditions.[8] There are Greco-Roman assumptions that the universe is a finite cosmos whose unchanging elemental order is also the order of reason, and that the practice of reason conforms to a propositional logic (as described in Note 7 and as articulated by Aristotle). There are Biblical assumptions that the universe is spoken by an infinite and ultimately unknowable creator, and is subject to the creator's will; that humans are created in the image of this creator, by whose grace humanity acquires fallible knowledge of the universe and of the creator's will; and that this

> knowledge will be completed in (and only in) the coming end of time. The modern projects assimilate one set of assumptions to the other, generating several unstable assumptions: e.g., that human reason comprehends the infinite, so that human knowledge of what is true and good extends potentially beyond any finite cosmos; and that the creator's work also obeys the laws of propositional logic.
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> • A vast series of critics has argued convincingly that the modern projects have displayed their potential for both good (e.g., generating models of human rights and equality, human liberty, and social justice) and evil (e.g., generating totalizing models of reason and truth that have, when put into socio-political practice, unintentionally or intentionally engendered vastly oppressive social, political, and economic institutions. The latter include varieties of nationalist polities, colonialist adventures, unlimited capitalist ventures, and totalitarian governments.)[9]

My worries about Yoder's projects of nonviolence are all linked to my assumption that modernity's presumably well-intentioned pursuits of universal truth and human welfare tended over time to generate as much evil as good. My interest in Yoder stems from my attraction to his critique of these modern pursuits and to his scripturally-grounded alternatives. My worries arise whenever his writing and his students' writing unintentionally reproduce some errant modern tendencies even in promoting alternatives.

I assume in this essay that the reliable ground of Yoder's alternative is the recognition that God alone, creator and redeemer, is truth, and that no proposition of human knowledge or belief is adequate to that truth. I assume therefore that no phrase in natural language can be trusted as ultimately equal to the task of disclosing that truth. On the basis of both Jewish and Christian accounts of what is "good news," I also assume that this God draws us into intimate relation to this truth and that we bring human reason with us into that relation. I assume, therefore, that natural and social science, as well as scriptural study, contribute to what we do within that intimate relation.

But I revisit my worries whenever Yoder's writing or anyone else's begins to assimilate the discourses of science and of scripture to each other, either by forcing scriptural study into clear-and-distinct propositions that remain instruments of science[10] or by attributing to scientific claims the universal truth and intrinsic value attributable only to divine speech (which does not lend itself to propositional definition). For the following discussion, I introduce two terms as a means of articulating what is wonderful or worrisome in Yoder's writing. I refer to his study of divine speech as "theocentric" and to his study of human-only or scientific discourse as "anthropocentric." I applaud both sides of his study and his efforts to draw one into relation to the other. But I am consistently worried when he *overdraws* this relation, rendering the theocentric clear-and-distinct and the anthropocentric universally true.

Reading Yoder's *Nonviolence – A Brief History*, I am thus worried when his theocentric writing treats nonviolence as if it were another name for a divine attribute or for what we should achieve by way of *imitatio Christi*. In this case, "nonviolence" should, like the divine name itself or like Hebrew terms in the Bible, remain semantically vague, so that we could neither offer a general definition of it nor say before the fact what specific human behavior it implies in a given situation. For each situation, there are guidelines for forming judgments, but we cannot predict what the results would be. *The Politics of Jesus* best illustrates this approach. It is less powerfully presented in *Nonviolence – A Brief History*, but is nevertheless suggested in places. For instance, when discussing Paul's reference to *exousiae*, or "powers," Yoder criticizes those who seek to restrict the meaning of the term to specific entities. Instead, he has "proceeded, as does Paul, without specifying what kinds of entities he is talking about" (*Nonviolence – A Brief History*, 100). They refer to a general or vague reality that appears differently in different occasions, resulting in "a social vision which is both pessimistic and optimistic" (ibid., 102). When things are not under human control, they cannot be predefined.

I am also worried when Yoder's anthropocentric writing treats the universal truth of "nonviolence" as if it referred to what it means within our everyday uses of natural language: in one case, specifically not supporting state-supported warfare; in another, no bloodshed; in yet another, patience

in response to all confrontations; in still another, community organizing to nurture the agency of those suffering oppression so that their concerted efforts will, without the use of body-on-body force, move the polity to change its policies. Here, "nonviolence" refers to a specific, clearly defined set of actions like these, not to some real but vague activity or disposition that makes itself known in different ways on different occasions.

Illustrating a Major Strength and an Area of Concern

The overall structure of the Warsaw lectures suggests the second, anthropocentric approach. I will consider here just a few illustrations. In chapter 1, "The Heritage of Nonviolent Thought and Action," Yoder writes,

> One of the most original cultural products of our century is awareness of the power of organized nonviolent resistance as an instrument in the struggle for justice. . . . [Its] operation is often informal and decentralized. . . . The secular historian will be interested in such phenomena from the purely scientific perspective of their occasional efficacy and novelty. The Christian historian will see in these experiences two further interlocked dimensions. On the level of moral theology, there is a debate going on among Christians since the fourth century concerning the moral legitimacy of violence in war or revolution. . . . There is also a broader theological perspective, which these considerations do not set aside or exhaust – but confirm. If it makes sense to understand the God of the Bible as having made himself known with a particular set of characteristics and purposes, then the interpretation of that nature and those purposes, with regard specifically to the shape of human conflict and liberation, is an exercise in far more than only ethics. It has to do with a doxological view of history as a whole, as the continuing liberating work of YHWH of Hosts, as the subject for Christian thanksgiving, prophecy, and hope. (*Nonviolence – A Brief History*, 17-18)

He then begins the "brief history" that characterizes this volume as a whole. In the frist chapter, his subjects are Tolstoy and Gandhi, from

whom he identifies a spiritual and organizational insight into nonviolent social organizing. In Gandhi's version, it has a "social basis in a communal [center]," the use of "traditional religious forms," "a thoroughly popular form of journalism," "appeal to the positive values of Anglo-Saxon law," and six more characteristics.

In this way, chapter 1 integrates both the theocentric and anthropocentric approaches. One might expect that, as a rabbinic philosopher, I should understand this. For the rabbis, "divine law" is earthbound and visible in its effects, so that, for every case, we can talk at once about God's scriptural discourse and about the character of pots and pans and oxen, all in a manner that is fully theocentric and fully anthropocentric. The rabbis do not universalize or absolutize their accounts of the anthropocentric side. If Yoder followed suit, then I would laud his writing as wholly rabbinic-like, which for me is a good thing. But let us see how it goes.

Yoder's moral judgments appear forcefully first in chapter 3, "The Lessons of the Nonviolent Experience." Yoder notes that, unlike the acts of faithfulness described in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the acts that he narrated in chapters 1 and 2 were not "models to be slavishly imitated" (a happily contingent claim). He adds, however, that these contingent cases do serve as "prototypes" for us, "corroborated by the later 'cloud of witnesses,'" in which he includes "the thousands of American young men who refuse their call to military service in the Vietnam War" (page 31) and many others. Here, the moral voice begins. To the certainty that I applaud about our capacity for direct encounter with God, Yoder adds a certainty about when a worldly action simply is the right thing, period.

How could I object to the latter certainty without making my interest in "direct encounter" rather trivial, as if we had some innerly direct experience but had to fumble around as mere relativists in the outer world? Have I not already praised Yoder for recognizing the outer as well as the inner as the place of God's word and will? My reply is that, in the rabbinic view I seek to follow, the character of our outer experience is worthy of full-hearted commitment in spirit, but it is also semantically imprecise, incompletely defined until after the action is passed and questions of intention become irrelevant or at least secondary. I do not believe Yoder is convinced that unwavering moral commitment can have a semantically imprecise action as

its object. In this chapter, therefore, his narrative about specific, nonviolent actions begins to display the co-presence of clear and distinct accounts of both their empirical settings and their moral weight. I would be satisfied if either one of these accounts was clear and the other probabilistic or indefinite. Yoder's apparent hope, however, is to uncover a history whose retelling would warrant clarity in both accounts. This may appear to him to be a triumph of the good, but I fear it would appear instead to be a triumph of the will: not that Yoder himself would be guilty of the latter, but he incautiously uses language that could be adopted in that way. Consider, for example, this passage:

> The unity of religious rootage and ethical strategy is not merely intellectual. . . . [B]efore it is a social strategy, nonviolence is a moral commitment; before it is a moral commitment, it is a distinctive spirituality. It presupposes and fosters a distinctive way of seeing oneself and one's neighbor under God. That "way of seeing things" is more like prayer than it is like shrewd social strategy, although it is both. It is more a faith than it is a theory, although it is both. (*Nonviolence – A Brief History*, 43)

Because Yoder is working to overcome a Christian heritage of spiritualism, of separating matters of body and spirit, he may not yet have noticed when he overstates the cure. This is a matter that rabbinic Judaism understands well because of its long heritage of religious law. The nonviolence Yoder advocates is, in rabbinic terms, a piece of Christian religious law. In the rabbinic system, an overall structure of moral certainty – that God has revealed his will and we have specific instructions that follow from this will – has been integrated over time with practices of inductive reasoning and of moral decision-making. Inductive reasoning seeks to collect evidence about both the immediate situation and how it compares with previous situations described in the long tradition of rabbinic case law. Time-specific moral actions can be made only in light of the inductive evidence, and I simply cannot locate an experienced and legal decisor (a *posek*, a rabbinic legal decision-maker) who would offer doubly clear and distinct accounts of both the results of induction and the process of decision-making.

I therefore cannot fully imagine Yoder's account fully rendered as

if it were practical, Christian religious law. When rabbinic religious law is enacted in the outer world, undivided moral commitment is embodied in an environment of probabilistic reasoning that I take to mean going "according to the grain of the universe." Accounts of this world simply have to be probabilistic or vague, because that is how the world runs. Yoder's pursuit of worldly certainty thus suggests, at times, either a not-yet-worldly religious law or else something like Enlightenment empiricism. By the latter, I mean the work of reasoners whose admirable passion for life in this world is served by rules of reasoning that retain an earlier rationalist and spiritualist's canon of logic. My overall sense is not that Yoder intends to generate totalizing paradigms of morality but that, like these empiricists, his work generates a totalizing effect against his intention.

In the sentences I have quoted, the potential for such an effect is exhibited in Yoder's vision of a causal chain, or at least genealogical lineage, that links a "distinctive" word of God's to a distinctive "social strategy," where "distinctive" refers to what can be apprehended in a clear and distinct way. For this reason, Yoder can conclude that "for the most convinced agents of nonviolent resistance, part of their motivation is a religious vision, but this does not mean that secular social science analysis could not interpret what is going on in purely secular categories" (*Nonviolence – A Brief History*, 44). I appreciate Yoder's effort to overcome dualisms that divide divine voice and scientific discourse. But non-division does not mean non-difference**.** Once this false division is repaired, newly refined tools of inquiry must be introduced to redescribe the actual relationship that both links and distinguishes divine and human voices.

As in *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, Yoder's treatment of Judaism in *Nonviolence – A Brief History* introduces such hopeful, new tools of inquiry, but it also reuses the "older" tools in ways that do not fulfill my hopes for the new. In chapter 6, Yoder turns his gaze from more general histories and sciences of nonviolence to the Bible. He argues that some judge, wrongly, that because it "teaches a kind of nationalism" the Old Testament is not a resource for peacemaking. In a voice recalling *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, he appeals to scholars, from von Rad on, who argue that narratives about "YHWH's wars" introduced something remarkable into the ancient Near East: the claim that YHWH, not the armies

of Israel, won this people's battles. The lesson, says Yoder, is not to fight, per se, but to trust God. If this account changes after the installation of King David, so does the role of God, who now tends to "take the other side." If Jesus preached in light of such a narrative, then his hearers heard the opposite of Marcion's lesson: Jesus came not to redeem Israel from her God but to draw her forward to her God, to trust fully and see fully "the salvation of YHWH." Thus,

> Holy wars and divinely sponsored kingship are the beginning and not the end of the Jewish national story. That story moves ahead so that, by the time of the writing of Chronicles, the model is nonviolent salvation after the style of the stories of Jehoshaphat. (*Nonviolence – A Brief History*, 79)

I profoundly appreciate these words, and much of what follows when Yoder traces what he considers the unfolding process of late Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism embrace of the politics of nonviolence. Here, his anthropocentric and theocentric histories meet in a single, redeeming point: the practice of nonviolent relations. And here we see the fruits of his efforts to overcome spirit-world dualism. Theological and scientific inquiry find that their two worlds of observation, analysis, discovery, and inference meet in a single end of history – that is, "end" as both purpose and resolution. The end is nonviolence, and that is also the fulfillment of "Old Testament" as well as of Gospel religion.

But Yoder's words also leave me with some concerns, even anguish. This single end is not the plain sense of the Bible as *Tanakh*, except when that Bible is read through the lens of Gospel. And, even then – if I read this correctly, and I cannot be sure – except when the Gospel is read through a lens reading the name of Jesus Christ as also the name "nonviolence." This returns me to my starting point: a wariness about substituting words of natural language for divine names and divine attributes, finite words for the infinite, clear ones for the *mysterium*. As the editors of the new volume remind me, Yoder's Christianity supersedes all things, not only Jewish self-understanding. I object to that only when "Christianity" is made clear, as I believe Yoder seeks to do; then supersessionism is another name for conceptual totalization, as in the fashion of modern reason.

In sum, while my voice may sound primarily critical, I continue to

move closer to the content of Yoder's position. Does that mean closer to his doctrine of "nonviolence?" I cannot answer in precise terms. What I trust in Yoder are not the English phrases he uses or the precise definitions he provides for them, but rather a pattern of conduct that, after some years of reading, I have come to perceive behind these phrases. It is not just the phrases, of course, but the fact that I have been studying them increasingly in the company of Mennonites, particularly at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and also elsewhere. Among many of these now-significant colleagues, I have observed the same strengths and areas of concern that I read in Yoder's work and also the same broader patterns of conduct that I admire. My concluding section addresses another way of describing these patterns.

Conclusion: Nonviolence or *Shabbat*?

I have hope in, and for, Yoder's teaching, because I do not believe it must be made clear-and-distinct, as he tries to make it, in order to uphold his commitment to worldly action. One strong reason for my hope is the taste of *shabbat*. This is the Biblical name of the seventh day, the day of the completion of creation, a time that is rest (not as no-action but as no-creating action), a time that is lived, at once, *both* as fully present *and* as the end of ends, the final future. Within rabbinic teaching and poetry and prayer, *shabbat* is also a name of God's "queen," (*malkhut*, or "queenliness," but anthropomorphized as the Sabbath bride), the *shekhinah* or presence of God in the now and present within which we taste what is Eden before and touch what is paradise at the end.

For the religious Jew "observing" *shabbat*, there is no cutting, dividing, instruments of taking apart and building up, leaving a mark, striking; for some even no overturning a stone, killing a fly, going or coming very far. But there is eating, smelling, tasting, enjoying, praying, studying words of scripture and of joy, and conversing (how else do you study?); there is hand in hand, arm on shoulder, eye to eye, and there is playing, and lovemaking, and sleeping. Some write that wondrous acts filling each day of the week are also of the character of *shabbat,* such as certain moments in prayer, moments of loving, moments of compassion and caring. So *shabbat* may be much more than maximally one-seventh of time. In the end, all is *shabbat*, and life lived for that end shares in it (to some degree, of course, since this

is not yet the end).

Are there all these things clearly and distinctly? Certainly *shabbat* has meanings as a word, and the meanings are clear in that we know for sure that we behold them. But I could not say they are also distinct in that we know for sure where one stops and the other begins. Thus we know for sure that scripture commands observance of *shabbat* and that observance entails "doing no manner of work." But precisely what is included in "work" and what not, and when, and in what circumstances? What if certain new circumstances arise? Each question of this kind marks a limit of distinctness and stimulates rabbinic and later Jewish legal interpreters to search for answers, case by case. There appears to be no end to new cases, as long as there is no end to new events of space and time.

Shabbat gives me hope in Yoder's teaching, because the pattern I observe behind his words recalls patterns I observe (in an indistinct way) in *shabbat*. I trust I could say of *shabbat* that it is not violence; I could say that what we tend to mean by "violence" is not of *shabbat,* in that sense "not permitted" *on shabbat*. But I could not say this with the definiteness Yoder might ask of me. I could, going in one direction of his "brief history," find value in tracing histories of *shabbat* observance, even histories of *shabbat*-like observances. I could find value in some empirical studies of the detailed actions and non-actions of *shabbat* observance, more broadly (although we could manage only the smallest sample) of the actions and non-actions of those who live for *shabbat* as the end of time and life and, more, of those who take on obligations to bring the end time as much as possible into everyday time: to act without limit in ways that are caring, loving, acting-not-acting. I could find value in scientific studies of the neurological, biochemical, ecological, economic, and socio-political significance and consequences of *shabbat* lived in this world. But I could not suppose that the one line of inquiry (the religious *doing* of *shabbat*, along quite secondarily with theological reflection on that doing) would meet the other (the empirical, historical, scientific) in a single, distinct point of truth, knowing, trust, and commitment. There is no such *totum simul.* To seek one would, I fear, do violence to *shabbat*.

That would be another, rather long study: to reflect on how a conceptual inquiry, a sorting out of ideas, reasoning, and argument about *shabbat* could

possibly do *violence* to *shabbat*. I would guess that either there is nothing here to study, or else we might also reflect on how a conceptual inquiry, or writing and teaching and arguing, about nonviolence could possibly *do* violence. I do not mean to imply some deeper suspicion about the project of *Nonviolence – A Brief History*. If I could, I would ask Yoder if any teaching (reasoning, showing, persuading) – Enlightenment or other – could do violence: and, if not, why we criticize this or that teaching in favor of another; or, if so, what we can do to lessen the potential in our own teaching, even when we are teaching about matters of ultimate value.

Notes

[1] John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, edited with an introduction and commentaries by Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[2] A number of readers were dismayed to see so many of our words in the volume; they would have preferred an uninterrupted volume of Yoder's own words. I take this opportunity to apologize and to offer an explanation. The volume appeared in the series *Radical Traditions: Theology in a Postliberal Key*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and me for Eerdmans. This series provides a venue where books can be published by scholars in any Abrahamic tradition without being measured by standards imposed by strictly secular traditions of inquiry or by another Abrahamic tradition. Reading the book as in part non-nonsupersessionist, I feared that, if we published it without commentary, the series could be accused of publishing books about Judaism that, without explanation, permitted the imposition of standards of another Abrahamic tradition. I now believe our commentaries take up too much space, but I remain concerned about a degree of non-nonsupersessionism in the book.

[3] See Peter Ochs, *The Free Church and Israel's Covenant* (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Univ. Press, 2010), and "The Limits of Postliberalism in John Howard Yoder's American Mennonite Church," in *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011).

[4] There is no need to burden the reader with the technical terminology I sometimes use, for example labeling the position I favor on these matters "postliberal." Those labels sometimes help in grouping theologians for the sake of analysis, but not for better understanding!

[5] In their Introduction, the editors of *Nonviolence – A Brief History* note my concern about Yoder's essentializing Judaism. Their response is to say that Yoder holds up to his Anabaptist measure not only Judaism but all other traditions. While they may have meant to console me, they more likely meant to defend Yoder as not worrying about particularisms but worrying about the universe and humanity as a whole. Privileging only the latter is precisely what concerns me.

[6] For him as for Hauerwas, I take this to mean encountering Jesus Christ and His spirit. I learn from this, although for me that direct presence is by way of prayer and of the spirit and

patterns of the people of Israel's covenantal life with God through time, and that of humanity and that of all creatures.

[7] Technically, we would say the propositions are constructed according to the principles of identity, non-contradiction, and excluded middle, implying, for one, that if "A is x" and x is not-y, then "A is not-y" and "if y, then not A."

[8] For the most part without intention.

[9] Among sources for this viewpoint are the Jewish philosophers Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas has offered a well-known critique of the modern west's addiction to "la totalité." Additional resources include "postliberal" Christian theologians, such as Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, Robert Jenson, Stanley Hauerwas, Kendall Soulen, and also John Howard Yoder (in his postliberal dimension). There are the postliberal-like genealogists of the West, including Alasdair MacIntyre and John Milbank, the pragmatist-genealogists John Dewey and Richard Rorty, and the many postmodern critics such as François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Marion. There are also many historians and social interpreters of the Holocaust who offer inferences like those I have just offered, such as Zygmunt Bauman, Max Horkheimer, Ira Katznelson, Theodore Adorno, Edith Wyschogrod, and others.

[10] But only instruments! Contemporary natural and social sciences tend, appropriately, to employ such propositions only in the service of more generally probabilistic and fallible modes of inquiry.

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