

# *The Conrad Grebel Review*

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## **CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS: POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE MENNONITE CHURCH**

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## Introduction

In October of 1998, nearly 100 people from across North America gathered at Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ontario, for the second Consultation on Issues of Power and Authority in the Mennonite Church. Most of those present were Mennonites, although an article in the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* drew others as well who were impressed that a denomination was actually willing to create a forum to talk about such sensitive issues. What most surprised several people was that this event—as well as the first consultation (June 1997 in Kitchener, Ontario)—was organized by lay people, with no official church body or organization involved.

As a committee planning the event, we wanted to make sure we were all talking about the same thing. We agreed upon a neutral definition of power: “to be able, the capacity to do.” Authority, we concluded, is “a kind of power conferred by others and made manifest in a communal context.” It is when one begins to move away from theoretical definitions into actual practices that one faces the question which guided the weekend’s discussion: “How do we REALLY treat each other?”

Why make ourselves vulnerable and talk about this subject? We decided to take the risk because enough of us became aware of needing a safe place where people in the Mennonite church, especially in positions of power and authority, could gather together and talk frankly about how we understand power in light of our Anabaptist theology—and ask how our theological position makes a difference. From the start we knew there would be disagreements, but unless we were willing to talk openly about them, they would continue to bubble up every once in a while in the forms of mild knifings in the back, poisoned relationships, and even blatant unchallenged abuses.

The idea was to approach the topic from several different perspectives. We wanted to hear from Mennonites in leadership roles in conferences and congregations, in church-run institutions, in church schools, in business, in professions, and in communities. One goal was to attempt to cross the chasm which has developed between business people and church leaders, between church leaders and academics, and between academics and business and professional people. Another unique aspect was that several groups of

Mennonites were represented: Mennonite Church, General Conference, Mennonite Brethren, and Conservative Mennonite. We wanted to give a chance for all to claim their voice and speak. We designed opportunities for interaction in plenary discussions, workshops, and small group discussions. Some of the best discussions took place around the dinner table and over coffee.

A complaint lodged after the first Consultation was: Where are the powerless? Was this gathering just a bunch of powerful people getting together to pat one another on the back? In answer to the second question: Definitely not; rather it was a time to challenge one another. In response to the first question, I wonder, Who are the powerless? (There are people who disagree with even asking this question.) The issue of powerlessness was not the theme of this Consultation. But there really ought to be a Consultation devoted to getting at what powerlessness is, how it comes about, and what we as a church are doing about it.

Not all of the presentations are printed here (and each published text has been edited for length). What you will find are three papers which set the context: Celia Hahn talks about the issues in a general way in the church context, William Klassen gives the Anabaptist context, and Nelson Kraybill discusses current issues in the Mennonite church with reference to the New Testament church. Other papers address leadership development, the church as employer, power and money, power in business and the church, and offer three personal accounts of decisions and dilemmas faced by persons in positions of power and authority. At the end are responses of three observers—two with no connection to the Mennonite church and one currently a student at a Mennonite college. We asked these people to watch us, listen to our dialogue, point out our blind spots, and suggest ways we might further our discussion. Their comments shed light on many places we'd rather not look.

There are always memorable moments at such events. One highlight was the spontaneous dialogue between J. Lawrence Burkholder and Nelson Kraybill during a plenary session. They weren't just talking about the Mennonite vision, they were passionate, agonizing about what it really means to live it. J. Lawrence spoke of the dialectic of the gap between what Jesus calls us to and what we actually do. Nelson responded that we've become complacent and dismiss Jesus' sayings with the excuse that what he said just

isn't realistic. J. Lawrence insisted we recognize the distance of the gap and ask seriously what we ought to do about it now. One participant said this debate harked back to the hallways of Europe where our early Anabaptist leaders hammered out a new understanding of what it means to be Christian. Anabaptism is existential, he insisted; we're learning together as we struggle together with the issues. As long as we do so, we remain a vital church. As soon as we become a uniform mass, we might as well pack it in. J. Lawrence and Nelson were like flint and rock, and their dialogue created sparks which captured our imagination.

While some wanted this consultation to achieve results and action statements, others insisted the dialogue had only begun. What happened was, however, neither the beginning nor the end. It was instead the gathering together of people concerned enough to talk about issues rarely discussed. As to whether there will be a Consultation III, I suggest it is time that some "official" bodies pick up the ball. Perhaps some of our church schools could have a consultation focused on leadership development. Perhaps MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) could further the dialogue on power and business. And perhaps some of our conference bodies could create a forum for discussing conference and congregational issues of power and authority and powerlessness.

Without the generosity of our sponsors, all of our ideas would have remained just ideas. It was also thanks to them that we were able to offer subsidies to students and unemployed individuals. Supporting organizations and individuals included Conrad Grebel College; Dueck, Sauer, Jutzi & Noll; Giesbrecht, Griffin & Funk; Mennonite Central Committee Ontario; Rockway Mennonite Collegiate; and Virginia Mennonite Conference. In the Sponsor category were Mennonite Economic Development Associates; Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (ON); and Weiland Ford. And at the Corporate Sponsor level were Erb Transport; Mersynergy Corp.; Riverside Brass; and Shantz Coach Lines. I thank them for their confidence in this project—and in several cases, for their participation.

**On the cover**

When Editor Marlene Epp invited me to design the cover for this issue, she presented me with a challenge for my new-found love of collage-making. She enticed me with a photograph of four staid-looking men, standing stiffly all in a row in a photographer's studio in the 1930's. These men were well-respected leaders in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario: S.F. Coffman, Oscar Burkholder, J.B. Martin, and C.F. Derstine. Now, in doing collage one gets to cut up images, de-contextualize them, and juxtapose them with other totally irrelevant (even irreverent) images. The first thing that came to my mind was how serious the topic of the Consultation was—sure, there were moments of laughter and even frivolity, but for the most part this was serious business. The cover, it seemed to me, should at least have an element of whimsy and a note of hope. Alas, there comes a point when all serious dialogue needs to get over its own seriousness and, recognizing the limitation of the word, to give itself over to image.

*Cheryl Nafziger-Leis*  
*Consultation Coordinator*

# Patterns of Growth in Authority

*Celia Allison Hahn*

How are we to exercise authority as faithful people? Many of us on the liberal side of the continuum are looking for an authority different from the kind we see claimed in fundamentalist churches. We want to be authoritative but not authoritarian. We want to proclaim our faith boldly but acknowledge that mystery pervades life. In our confusion we may find ourselves flipping back and forth between two cherished and seemingly contradictory goals: we want to take charge and lead courageously; and we want to engage with others in an open collegial way.

I haven't been able to find approaches to authority that help us grow in the exercise of our *own* authority. We mostly hear about *other* people's authority from the social scientists. Authority is defined in the social sciences as legitimate power, a definition that is true but not adequate for our purposes here. So I decided to ask some clergy and lay ministers about their experiences in exercising authority, and to study the picture of authority in the gospels. The people I interviewed gave four kinds of answers to the question, Where do you get your authority? These were: 1) It's given by others; 2) It comes from inside you; 3) You take it; 4) It comes from God.

There is no road map to mature, integrated authority—the kind of authority that embraces all those responses—but there are some discernable sequences. Let's look at patterns of growth suggested by experience and the gospels. I see four kinds or stages of authority: Received, Autonomous, Assertive, Integrated.

## **I. Received authority**

“You get it when they give you the keys,” as one young pastor put it. We all start out responding to the authority of others—parents, teachers, clergy. People may move from a posture of responding to others' authority to receiving

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*Celia Allison Hahn is Editor-in-Chief at the Alban Institute, Washington, D.C. The Alban Institute equips church leaders for the practical work of ministry through research, training, and publication.*



their own, ready made, the kind they give you with the keys. I asked Howard Ashby, a Maori pastor in New Zealand, “Where does your authority come from?” He answered, “From God. And the people. I get up in the morning and I just let the Spirit move wherever, whatever I have to do. You couldn’t plan your week, you couldn’t plan your day, you just move how the Spirit moves you. And from the people. One minute you could be here, the next minute you’re called somewhere else.” “From God. And the people.” Beautiful and simple. And lost.

What are the promises of received authority? Receiving is essential to the religious life: think of open hands and where you experience them. Received authority gives us some common assumptions that are useful when things get tough. But there may be problems too. When I carry out a role just the way they told me to, I may wake up and find I’m behaving in a way that goes against my convictions. I may fail to develop my own point of view. When I am operating out of a role totally defined by others, I may find I am getting into trouble. You may have had experiences like this.

In *Stress, Power, and Ministry*, Jack Harris describes a group of passive clergy in fear of rocking the boat and displeasing parishioners. When passivity is our problem, we need to embrace the promise of discovering a more centered self.

## **2. Autonomous authority**

As Jack Harris worked with the clergy, it dawned on them that their behavior was self-destructive, their self-esteem eroded, and their energy low, and that they were feeling helpless rage.

One said he now began to see himself as person distinct from the church for the first time since he left high school. When I wake up to autonomous authority, I begin to define my own reality instead of letting other people do it, and my self-esteem and energy expand enormously.

Autonomous leaders have discovered a more centered self. But they can still miss the mark. In our culture the autonomous leader often appears in the role of ‘The Expert.’ If the expert is defined as ‘The Authority,’ then I’m not it. This disempowers me. If the clergy are professionals, what then are laity?

The goal of self-sufficiency pursued by experts is not a good fit with our religious tradition. The autonomous authority deserves respect for a willingness to take lonely and difficult positions. But loneliness may be romanticized. Are we fascinated with the Lone Ranger because he strikes a blow for justice, or because he doesn't need anybody else? Some compare the loneliness of clergy to the loneliness of Christ on the cross. We have to distinguish courage to take unpopular positions from a romantic love of loneliness for its own sake. Does the appeal of such statements lie in self-differentiation or self-dramatization?

Autonomy is the way to move out of unresolved dependence, but it's only one turn in the road, not the end of the journey. Mature authority is found not in isolation but in engagement.

### **3. Assertive authority**

If isolation is my problem, I might try making a difference in the world. You have to *claim* authority. That's part of the reality of authority. When United Church of Christ consultant Joyce Yarrow, a lay woman, finds she is not being heard in a group, she says, "I take strength in myself and make [being heard] happen." She makes it happen that she gets heard. Assertive authority is characterized by vigor, initiative, and responsibility.

But assertiveness can edge over into control. The positive move toward expressing myself actively in the world can easily shift into the darker mode of being myself all over the place. When authority means control, leaders can get more interested in being right than in doing what is needed. They find themselves crushed by the burden of too much responsibility and end up overloaded, resentful, and headed for burnout. Lay people end up disrespected and disempowered.

The control culture we live in promotes loyalty toward the ingroup, hostility toward the outgroup. It becomes natural to divide people into winners and losers. Why would the usher in his three-piece suit welcome a ragged, homeless man at the church door with an open heart, when the usher has proved he is superior—he has rooted out weaknesses that hold this ragged fellow back?

People at the assertive stage and those at the receiving stage can lock together in a symbiotic arrangement: the receptive one doesn't have to assert herself; the assertive one doesn't have to admit he needs anything.

These three kinds of authority—Received, Autonomous, Assertive—are only stages in the movement toward wholeness. The problem lies in getting stuck in any of them and losing sight of the value of the others. When assertive people conclude “I have arrived,” we can conclude that “one thing more is needed.”

#### **4. Integrated authority**

Integrated authority is the ability to exercise received authority, autonomous authority, and assertive authority as needed in the situation. And it is more than the sum of those three parts. The boundary between assertion and integration is a difficult one to cross. It’s different from the boundary between receiving and autonomy. It takes courage and insight to move from letting other people call the shots to exercising control over my life from within.

But the movement from assertion to integration appears to be a shift in the opposite direction. From the assertive heights, it seems *wrong*. Like slipping backward. Jesus spends a lot of time helping people move from assertion to integration. But they don’t understand. They resist. They get angry. They go away bewildered. They go away sad.

It’s hard to ‘get it’ about integrated values, but some do get it. Their old assumptions get flipped upside down. What are the new understandings?

##### *a. Authority belongs to God*

The clearest message is that authority is given by Father to Son, Son to disciples, and handed on to others. This leads to a sense of abundance. You don’t have to ration it. It’s not like the kind of authority we carve chunks of and hang on to. If God doesn’t control people, and it is God’s authority that we are exercising, that shapes our authority in a definitive way.

For lay Bible teacher Verna Dozier, this difference means that authority is held in trust: “God called Abraham. ‘God said, I will bless you in order that you may be a blessing.’ Authority is a gift to be used. For God, for God’s people.” For Peter Sherer, who raises millions of dollars to fight AIDS, the fact that his authority is given means that he is not alone. When he is troubled by doubts about his competence, he says, “I put myself in churchly circumstances” where “I’m reminded that I might not be running the railroad by myself.”

If authority belongs to God, growing toward integrated authority means a movement from willfulness to willingness. Look at the authority of Jesus, who said: “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.”

b. *Integrated authority does not depend on control*

Integrated authority means cooperating with life (and other people) instead of trying to be on top of it all. Perhaps we are not called to be on top of life, but to be in it, faithfully.

Jim Adams, an Episcopal clergyman, says, “I have no control . . . but I have more and more authority . . . Authority doesn’t mean getting your way. Sometimes [parishioners] agree and sometimes they disagree. And sometimes they do what I want and sometimes they don’t. But even when they disagree or don’t do what I want, they haven’t diminished my authority as a religious leader . . . I don’t feel I’ve got the kind of authority that an army general or the CEO of a corporation has. I wouldn’t know what to do with it if I did.” Dorothy McMahon, minister of the Pitt St. Uniting Church in Sydney, Australia, says: “I’ve discovered with joy and amazement that sometimes I have the greatest authority when my own life is at its most vulnerable.” She talks about authority as being “taken right down into one’s humanness.”

c. *Hierarchy is not the point*

Remember the story of James and John? On the road, Jesus walking ahead, telling them yet again what’s going to happen to him. James and John catch up: they say, We want to sit, one on your right hand, one on your left. (“Can we be the vice-presidents?”) The others get mad. The answer turns the question around: “It shall not be so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant . . . .”

It is not a question of who is going to get to be the winners; rather, it is a new game. In this new game those who want to be great are not those who can scramble up the rungs of the ladder first, but those who do what’s needed for everybody. Rings are a better metaphor than rungs. You climb the ladder rung by rung, stepping off at the top. A tree grows ring by ring, adding to what is there. Growth is now seen as the gathering of one richness upon another.

d. *These people experience their authority as integrated*

Judith McMorland teaches personnel management and organizational change in the Continuing Education program at the University of Auckland. She is also an Anglican laywoman. Notice the integration of authority in her story which is quite commonplace:

The work we did in the diocese, when we were looking at the diocese in review . . . . There were a committee of eight and I'd been asked by the bishop to be on that committee because I'd been very rude about the clergy anyhow, and had made a lot of noises . . . . and [had] also come out of that management sort of background so the thought was 'she can get on with it,' but working particularly with Peter Beck we . . . claimed within the group to do it differently. The very first meeting we had, somehow the eight people caught it and thereafter all the process things we did, [in] which [we] were claiming the authority to be the guardians of the process—it all just flowed wonderfully. Everybody was fully there on their own authority. There wasn't any sense of not being peers, but we had different skills.

I asked her if she could think of an image: "The immediate image is of a golden rain firework. Ah! Just sort of gentle and lots of sparks, sparkles . . . . Not rockets, just a little gentle rain."

e. *Integrated authority is paradoxical*

What had been seen as opposites are no longer locked in painful contradiction. Integrated authority means living in the tension between *self-definition* and *self-emptying*: Self-definition is defined as *exousia*—out of being, out of one's own being or essence. Think of the "I am" statements in the gospels, echoing the Hebrew scriptures: "For he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:29). Jesus did not derive his authority from quoting a lot of sources, unlike the scribes who appealed to "authorities" to justify their position. This inner authority is that which a person carries into any role or context. Self-emptying is *kenosis*—"Emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." When we stop being full of ourselves we can make space for the other. We can be open to receive again.

Self-definition and self-emptying: this sounds contradictory. Here is a dynamic paradox in the picture of Jesus. Remember in John the story of the footwashing. During supper Jesus got up and took off his robe; he tied a towel around himself, poured water into a basin, and prepared to wash the disciples' feet. In John 13:3-4, there are two phrases in one sentence: "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands" and "tied a towel around himself" are connected and paradoxical statements that convey the gospels' picture of authority. He "tied a towel around himself" (*kenosis*, self-emptying). Not an act of passivity and powerlessness, but the action of one whose hands hold "all things."

*f. Integrated authority brings together strengths of Received, Autonomous, and Assertive authority*

The serenity to receive, the courage to be assertive, and the autonomy to discern are all present options. People with integrated authority can be receptive again. First they are receptive toward God. And they are receptive toward others. If the usher in his three-piece suit has integrated authority, he can welcome the ragged man from his heart. Those integrated folks are on friendly terms with the weakness in which their power is made perfect.

People with integrated authority can be autonomous. Paradoxically, the more a person becomes one with God, the more distinct that person becomes as a self. With that oneness and selfhood comes the courage to stand against resistance—to stand with integrity and consistency. The integrated leader's autonomy holds benefits for others: it can extend freedom to others and provide opportunities to grow. If I define myself, I can invite you to define yourself, too.

Integrated leaders can speak "the word of God with boldness." Boldness is a sign of inner integration, in contrast to driving with the brakes on. Integrated leaders do not abdicate their assertiveness in order to empower others, but encourage their followers toward assertion as well, toward being co-authors of the faith.

*g. Integrated leaders evoke and enhance the authority of others*

There is plenty of authority to go around. Ruth Shinn, United States Labor Department Division Chief, says: "You never know what member of the

group is going to do something that is just right. And I like that. And that's why I enjoy a moderating role [which she has at the First Congregational Church] more than a directing role [like the one she has at work]." Her view contrasts with The Expert, whose authority is based on others' lack of it.

Leaders with integrated authority are always arranging spaces in which other people's authority can be born. Dwight Lundgren, an American Baptist minister, is one who is always arranging spaces in which other people's authority can be born. Dwight looks to "Barnabas, the encourager and hospitality person" as a model: "I said at the beginning of my ministry that one of the things I wanted to do in preaching was not just come with reports about what scripture is all about but help people feel comfortable with handling it themselves, so that they feel as I'm working in it, 'Oh, THAT'S how you do that.'"

*h. People with integrated authority can inhabit a wider world*

Someone else is healing, Lord, should we stop him? Here is an encounter between the ingroup outlook of the culture of control and the universal quality of integrated authority. All prior stages carved up reality, embracing part of it, pushing away the rest (therefore accepting some people and rejecting the rest). Integrated authority can be universal precisely because it is not reactive to the parts of life and the people represented by earlier stages. Those with integrated authority can inhabit a wider world because they can tolerate contradictions.

**How do we tend to our own maturing in authority?**

It is a paradoxical road. We need to attend faithfully to the piece of the road where we find ourselves now. The answers that seem useful at one turn may not help us at the next.

If your authority is primarily Received, you may want to clarify your own uniqueness, your own point of view. If you find yourself at the bend in the road called Autonomous, you may want to listen for a call to move out, to engage, to make a difference. If Assertiveness is the primary mark of your authority, you may be experiencing some tension from clenching the fist of control. You may be getting ready to let go and open your hand.

If you often find that you can exercise your authority flexibly, do what is needed right now, then just relax and give yourself to the ministry where you are, making the choices that are now yours to make: to listen for a call to move out, to engage, to make a difference.



# Power and Authority: Helping the Church Face Problems and Adapt to Change

*J. Nelson Kraybill*

## **Introduction: A case study of dysfunctional leadership**

I once was called upon to help structure a mediation process for a deeply divided congregation. The minister of this traditional congregation had been trained as a lawyer and he had an analytical mind. But the dynamic realities of a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit had transformed his expectations of congregational life and worship. The minister began to teach from the pulpit on issues of healing, spiritual gifts, tongues, and evangelism. Feeling a call from God for renewal in his congregation, the minister prayed, cajoled, and coached some members of his flock into euphoric worship and deeper awareness of God. Music changed, worship services became unpredictable in structure and format, some worshippers fell to the floor in a trance, and new believers began attending the church.

One day, on a personal retreat, the minister received a vision of how God wanted that congregation to change and grow through evangelism. The minister wrote out the plan and convinced church council members of its merits during a leadership retreat. With the apparent backing of the church council, the minister presented his vision to the congregation and began to implement the plan.

A rebellion ensued. Older members of the congregation missed traditional hymns and did not like popular chorus songs. Some people felt manipulated into specific worship expressions that seemed unnatural to them. But the most common complaint was that *basic patterns of congregational life and witness were being decided entirely by the pastor and by his supporters on the church council*. Some members of the congregation were grateful for strong leadership, but a substantial minority felt dis-

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*J. Nelson Kraybill is President of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.*

empowered and “out of the loop.” They withdrew support from the minister, and the resulting crisis paralyzed and nearly fractured the congregation.

### **Paradox of power at the heart of the gospel**

At the heart of the gospel lies this paradox: The Lamb of God, who came with such vulnerability that he died stretched out on a Roman cross, is also the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who acted with such authority and power that he was able to transform both the lives of his contemporary followers and the lives of millions in subsequent generations who believed in his name. It has been the ongoing challenge of the Christian church, attempting to be faithful to a Lord of such paradox, to engage the issues of power and authority in ways that are true to the gospel. This challenge is unavoidable, since power and authority are integral factors of any functioning group, organization, or society. Either the church will embrace the responsibility for using power and authority wisely, or it will be on the receiving end of internal and external forces that may use power and authority for less than noble purposes.

The Gospel of Mark vividly illustrates the paradoxes of authority in the life of Jesus. On one hand, the evangelist portrays Jesus exercising awesome power by calming the sea, exorcising demons, forgiving sins, healing the sick, and silencing powerful opponents. On the other hand, Mark presents him as one willing to serve even to the extent of laying down his life. The paradox of power and authority is captured in the teaching of Jesus: “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44).

This paradox of authority and servanthood in Mark, according to a recent interpreter, “is intended to persuade Jesus’ followers to balance these two motifs in their own discipleship role within the community of believers. One cannot exist without the other.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Power and authority are not intrinsically good or evil**

Believers in the early church were keenly aware of the pervasiveness of power and authority, and recognized the potential for great evil or great good

in these forces. The gospel entered a first-century political and economic world in which power was massively (and often oppressively) visible in the form of the Roman imperial government. From the perspective of New Testament authors, Rome ruled all the known world and was the constant backdrop for the story of Jesus and the early church. We see textual evidence of imperial power in everything from the decree of Emperor Augustus at the time of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1), to the house arrest of Paul at Rome at the end of his missionary career (Acts 28), to the late-first century admonition to "honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17).

Christian theological assessment of such overwhelming political power ranged from Paul's cautiously optimistic view of the function of earthly rulers to the virulent rejection of Roman authority expressed by John of Patmos. What these two early leaders share, however, is a conviction that *authority exercised by humans is derivative*. Human authority and power come either from God (Rom. 13:1, "there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God") or from Satan (Rev. 13:2, "And the dragon gave it [the beast] his power and his throne and great authority"). Even in Revelation 13, in which the beast seems to represent idolatrous and blasphemous Rome, the ultimate source of power is God: Satan, who vests the beast with power, had usurped that power from God (Rev. 12:7-9).

The New Testament does not use the word "authority" (*exousia*) for references to God or Jesus. When the word refers to others (such as disciples, Paul, or congregational leaders), some phrase is typically included that reminds the reader such authority simply is derived from God, Jesus, or the scriptures.<sup>2</sup> The word "authority" refers to the "author" of power, and Christians recognize that the only legitimate source had to be divine (Rom. 13:1). This conviction engendered a radical sense of political allegiance to Jesus Christ, as reflected in the accusation against Christian missionaries at Thessalonica: "These people . . . have been turning the world upside down . . . They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:6, 7).

The book of Revelation is full of liturgical praise to God—and specifically to Jesus—who alone is "worthy . . . to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12; cf.

4:11). Throughout Revelation, honorary titles and gestures of allegiance are lavished upon Yahweh God and his Messiah in ways that seem to parallel, and directly compete with, expressions of loyalty commonly showered upon the Roman emperor and his minions.

### **Power in the church is radically different from power in pagan society**

The above citations are among numerous indications in the New Testament that early Christians understood earthly political powers to be radically relativized by the claims of the gospel. Yet, the primary concern of the early church seems to have been the nature of power and authority *within the new faith community* of those who called Jesus *kurios* (“Lord,” the same title commonly given to the emperor). Throughout the NT runs a theme that believers are to adopt attitudes toward power, authority, and servanthood that mirror the life of Jesus. Followers of Jesus embody and wrestle with the same paradox of power/authority and servanthood that the Gospel writers capture in Jesus. The author of the fourth Gospel records Jesus washing his disciples’ feet and saying, “I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). Paul writes, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who . . . emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Phil. 2:5-7).

The emphasis on servanthood in the early church is all the more striking because the dominant (Roman imperial) culture was highly stratified and class-conscious. Imperial society was a power pyramid, with the emperor at the apex and slaves at the broad, powerless base:<sup>3</sup>

---Emperor---  
 ---Provincial rulers---  
 -----Provincial elites-----  
 ----Freeborn and freedmen----  
 -----Slaves-----

Roman imperial society functioned on a patronage system, with every individual being either a patron to someone “below” or a client to someone “above.” Patron-client relationships in the first century were formalized and ubiquitous, with well-recognized terminology and rituals. Patrons gave

“benefits” to clients, such as employment, business loans, or access to circles of economic and political influence. In exchange, clients gave loyalty, praise and service to their patrons. Patrons wanted to be recognized (publicly, if possible) as “benefactors.”<sup>4</sup> Clients wanted to be recognized (publicly, if possible) as “friends” of their more-powerful patrons.<sup>5</sup> It was typical for people in the middle of the power pyramid to be *both* patron and client, relating in those respective roles to people above and below their social level.

Jesus rejected the familiar power-pyramid and patronage systems of his day: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you . . .” (Luke 22:25-26). Jesus recognized that pagan society had a pyramid of power relationships, and he intended for his followers to structure their own group relationships in a different pattern. Even in relations with pagan society, Jesus admonished his disciples to avoid any striving for upward mobility. At banquets, when social position was most evident by seating position, his followers were to take the lowliest place at the table (Luke 14:7-11).

Many people in the early church would have been influenced by Roman imperial understandings of power and authority. Corinth, from which we have such an abundance of early church evidence through the writings of Paul, was a relatively young city with fluid social *strata* and political structures. Corinth was a crossroads urban area, filled with immigrants and people looking for upward mobility. Paul says in writing to the church there, “not many [of you] were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But . . . God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong . . .” (1 Cor. 1:26-27).<sup>6</sup> After alluding to the social/political/economic weakness of believers at Corinth, Paul continues with the underlying principle of his own influential ministry: “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). The power of Paul’s leadership rests in the Holy Spirit, not in Paul himself.

### **Contrast of power *praxis* in pagan and Christian settings**

The late first-century letter of 1 Peter gives a striking profile of the contrast between pagan and Christian engagement of power structures. A large portion of this document falls into two major sections: (1) 2:11-4:11. Directions for how believers relate to power structures *that are not under the lordship of*

*Jesus Christ*; (2) 4:12-5:11. Directions for how believers handle power within the faith community *that recognizes the lordship of Jesus Christ*. These two major sections are apparent because of parallel structure, in which each section begins with the word “Beloved . . .” and ends with a doxology.<sup>7</sup>

The first section focuses on relationships with a pagan world. Christians should “accept the authority of” political rulers, believing slaves should “accept the authority of” (non-Christian) masters, and believing wives should “accept the authority of” (non-Christian) husbands. Structurally, at the center of this section is a hymn fragment that refers to Jesus: “He committed no sin . . . .When he was abused, he did not return abuse” (2:22, 23). The experience of Christians relating to pagan power structures will be suffering and apparently powerlessness, *toward a redemptive and missiological end* (2:24; 3:1,2).

The second section deals with power relationships within the Christian church. Instead of speaking to the party that society would normally deem the subservient one in a power relationship (as was the case in the first section), the author addresses the persons holding power—the congregational elders. The structural center again is a hymn fragment, this time “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (5:5). Clustered around this hymn fragment are exhortations for leaders to “tend the flock . . . exercising the oversight.” Elders should “not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples.” To all readers the author says, “Humble yourselves . . . .” The experience of leadership within the faith community will be one of unpretentious, attentive modelling and mentoring and overseeing. This happens with a certainty that *this way of exercising power will receive divine blessing and validation when Christ returns* (5:6).

### **Church leadership is vested with Holy Spirit power**

Along with the above evidence of servanthood and humility in church leadership comes abundant evidence that both Jesus and early church leaders were vested with power, *particularly in the context of mission*. The synoptic Gospels emphasize that Jesus acted and spoke “as one having authority” (Mark 1:22); the fourth Gospel underscores the notion that Jesus’ authority was granted to him by God (John 12:49). Jesus sent out his followers on a preaching assignment and “gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast

them out, and to cure every disease . . .” (Matt. 10:1). The first Gospel concludes with Jesus’ words, “All authority (*exousia*)<sup>8</sup> in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matt. 28:18, 19).

Luke begins his narrative of the early church after the resurrection with Jesus’ assurance to his followers, “you will receive power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). These and other power/authority references in a missiological context suggest that power and authority ultimately play the role of enabling the church to cross barriers of taboo, class, race, and nation to reconcile people to God.

### **Acts 15: Leadership addressing conflict**

Any group or society that survives and remains vital will encounter constant change. Change comes because of new factors in the environment or from new needs or personalities within the group, and it nearly always generates conflict. Effective exercise of power and authority in such a changing environment is measured to a large extent by the leaders’ ability to direct the process and outcome of conflict in such a way that the group is strengthened.

The New Testament model of leadership, with its emphasis on humility, rejects the authoritarian or coercive approaches so common in the ancient world. Despite vigorous rejection of *hubris* and coercion in the Christian community, early church leaders nevertheless acted with authority. The very fact that the NT letters and books ever got written is, in each case, an assertive expression of power and authority. Most early Christian literature was generated by conflict, and perhaps no issue was more volatile than the question of whether Gentiles needed to adhere to the full Jewish law in order to be part of the church. This was a strategic matter with far-reaching implications for the mission, identity, and character of the entire Christian movement. Without assertive and wise leadership, this matter could have seriously divided the church.

The book of Acts gives a succinct narrative of a process the early church engaged to address the question of relationships between Jews and Gentiles. The following steps are evident:

1. *There was a big disagreement.* “Certain individuals” differed with Paul and Barnabas on the question of circumcision, and “no small dissension and debate” arose (Acts 15:1-2).

2. *The church sought out a forum in which all parties could be heard.* The local faith community in Antioch took action, and appointed “Paul and Barnabas and some of the others to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders” (15:2).

3. *People in conflict had opportunity to tell their stories.* The delegation of disputants arrived at Jerusalem and “reported all that God had done with them” (15:4).

4. *There was enough time to air convictions, feelings and perspectives.* There was “much debate” (15:7).

5. *Leaders, after careful listening, proposed a way forward that took into account concerns raised by both sides of the issue.* “After they finished speaking, James replied, ‘My brothers . . . I have reached the decision that we should not trouble [with circumcision] those Gentiles who are turning to God . . . but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication . . .’” (15:13-21).

6. *The proposed solution was ratified by consensus.* With the “consent of the whole church” the leaders at Jerusalem sent a delegation to Antioch to convey the agreements reached (15:22-25).

The entire decision-making process was handled with sensitivity to all participants, under Holy Spirit guidance. The end result “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (15:28). Power and authority were exercised in ways that faced the real issues and engaged the primary stakeholders. Paul and other leaders in the church were thinking and acting creatively, experimenting with new possibilities at the edge of the faith community.

Far more than a mere facilitator, Paul was bringing visionary agenda and issues to the church. When new realities of the mission enterprise generated conflict, he and others involved in debate looked to three places for decision-making cues: 1) up-to-date evidence from a real ministry situation, 2) the witness of scripture, and 3) guidance of the Holy Spirit as experienced by the gathered faith community.

There is some indication that the dispute recorded in Acts 15 was not resolved as neatly as Luke would have us believe (cf. Gal. 2:1-14). There also



may have been more of an authoritarian spirit to the role of James (Acts 15:13) than my interpretation would suggest. Nevertheless, Acts 15 provides one example of leaders moving the faith community through change in a way that involved vigorous and appropriate exercise of power and authority.

**Leaders with courage to differentiate *and* stay in relationship**

One decisive and positive element in the Acts 15 story is that *leaders had the courage both to differentiate and to stay in meaningful relationship with others in the church community*. This theme is explored in *Generation to Generation* by Edwin H. Friedman.<sup>9</sup> Friedman notes that churches and synagogues function much like families and says: “What is vital to changing any kind of ‘family’ is not knowledge of technique or even of pathology but, rather, the capacity of the family leader to define his or her own goals and values while trying to maintain a nonanxious presence within the system.”<sup>10</sup>

In family systems therapy “the criterion of whom to counsel is no longer who has the symptom, but *who has the greatest capacity to bring change to the system*.”<sup>11</sup> It may not be the “identified patient” with whom the therapist works, but someone in the family who appears to be functioning well and is in a position to influence the patient. Applying this same principle to problems and challenges in the church, it often will be the leader who has the greatest capacity to change the system.

This does not mean that the leader takes personal responsibility for everything the group does, since that would mean the leader has not differentiated his or her personality from that of the group (and will absorb a dangerous amount of stress). Nor does it mean the leader will manipulate or coerce the group, since that will keep others from maturity. The effective leader cannot simply go his or her own way and ignore the group’s desires, because that quickly will destroy trust. Friedman concludes that “It is the maintaining of self-differentiation while remaining a part of the family that optimizes the opportunities for fundamental change.”<sup>12</sup>

Friedman depicts leadership in a group as falling somewhere on a continuum between *charisma* and *consensus*.<sup>13</sup> Charismatic leadership depends upon the sheer energy, brilliance, and persuasiveness of the leader. This type of power tends to make members of the group into dependent

followers and creates serious instability when the leader dies or leaves. Consensus-oriented groups abhor polarization and discourage the individualism or assertiveness of any leader. Such groups will usually be less imaginative and are apt to be derailed by extremists or dysfunctional members.

A family systems understanding of group dynamics calls for *leadership through self-differentiation* of the leaders themselves. “If a leader will take primary responsibility for his or her own goals and self, while *staying in touch* with the rest of the organism, there is more than a reasonable chance that the body will follow . . . . Any leader can stay in touch if he or she does not try to stand out. The trick . . . is to be able to differentiate self and still remain in touch in spite of the body’s efforts to counter such differentiation.”<sup>14</sup> This means that the leader does not try to define followers, but only himself or herself.

### **The apostle Paul’s authority at Corinth and Philippi**

The apostle Paul sometimes seemed inadequately to differentiate himself from the congregations with which he worked as a leader. An example of this is his solicitous and agonized response to the church at Corinth when it seemed to reject his authority, and his jubilation when the congregation again affirmed him (2 Cor. 7:2-16). But Paul’s candor about his inner emotional response as a leader is valuable, because it reveals his very human struggle to place responsibility for the direction of a congregation with Christ and with the church members—not with himself as a leader.

Paul’s view of authority pivots on his understanding of the cross as the power of the gospel. “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” is how Paul summarizes his message and his ministry at Corinth (1 Cor. 2:2). He speaks of coming to Corinth “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (2:3). He identifies as fully as possible with the person of his Lord: “But we have the mind of Christ” (2:16), “we take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). *The way Paul differentiates as a leader is by subsuming his ego and personality into the character and presence of the risen Christ.* Such a self-conscious blending of personality in leaders could spin off into delusions of grandeur if they begin to think of themselves as divine. But what Paul incorporates from Christ is the

paradoxical power of the cross—no coercion, but rather suffering love, respect even for the enemy, and clear expression of personal conviction.

In 2 Cor. 11-13, the apostle indulges in a passage of self-defence, pleading, sarcasm, and boasting. But even in the midst of this outburst, Paul still had his theology of leadership rooted in the cross. Paul “boasts” of his weakness and vulnerability, and reports that the Lord told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). This phrase captures the paradox of non-coercive leadership that is full of conviction and self-differentiation: it has astounding power *when the leader loves and cares enough to stay in touch even with those who disagree or oppose*.

The object of good leadership is both to bring individual members of the community to maturity and to help the group move toward corporate objectives. Paul tells readers at Corinth, “we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become perfect” (2 Cor. 13:9). To believers at Philippi he says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you . . .” (Phil. 2:12, 13). The author of Ephesians wants leaders in the church “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” until all members come “to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

Although Paul does not always exhibit “nonanxious presence” as a leader (!), he periodically seems to catch himself owning too much as an apostle. Throughout his letters, he turns over responsibility for the outcome of a congregational crisis or decision either to the faith community in question or to God. *Paul differentiates, asserts, makes himself vulnerable, provides leadership—and then usually insists that ownership for the direction of the church lies entirely in the hands of his readers under the lordship of Christ*. In Paul’s case, power and authority rested more in the clarity of his convictions and message than in his office as a missionary, apostle, or church planter.

### **Leadership without easy answers**

In *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Ronald Heifetz gives a paradigm of group decision-making that emphasizes the role of the leader in helping groups face their own problems. “Imagine the differences in behavior when people operate with the idea that ‘leadership means influencing the community to

follow the leaders' vision versus 'leadership means influencing the community to face its problems.'"<sup>15</sup>

Heifetz decisively argues for the latter view and says leadership is more an *activity* than a position of authority or a personal set of characteristics.<sup>16</sup> The primary task of leadership is to help groups address conflicts in values and to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face.<sup>17</sup> Most groups will have competing values, and a number of these may need to be included within the group for it to function. Good leadership, Heifetz says, "places emphasis on the act of giving clarity and articulation to a community's guiding values. Neither providing a map for the future that disregards value conflicts nor providing an easy way out that neglects the facts will suffice for leadership."<sup>18</sup>

Healthy group process will positively *encourage* conflict, in the sense of eliciting a full range of perspectives and convictions from within (or even from beyond) the group. Heterogeneity is a valuable resource for social learning, but leaders must help steer a group toward agenda that is really worth sustained attention. Groups facing difficult problems are tempted to seize upon a distracting issue that feels manageable rather than to face straight into complex, foundational matters that might be more pressing.<sup>19</sup> It is possible, for example, that the current North American Mennonite preoccupation with homosexuality is a distracting issue. Underlying this lightning-rod issue may be more foundational questions of Bible interpretation, sources of authority, acculturation, or understanding of the meaning of covenant.

When groups become highly conflicted or agitated, people commonly look to authoritarian or charismatic figures who will decide on behalf of the group and impose solutions. These leader-focused strategies ultimately disable the group, diminishing personal and collective resources for accomplishing adaptive work in the future.<sup>20</sup>

### **Conflict management as a powerful leadership tool**

Since group adaptation always means dealing with conflict, it is noteworthy that the New Testament has specific counsel on steps to be taken when disputes arise. Parties in conflict must be in direct conversation with each other and should go to a third party only as a last resort (Matt. 18:15-19). The church

is a place where members “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and “do not let the sun go down” on anger (Eph. 4:26). These basic rules of conflict management are indispensable for effective leadership and will help shape the ethos of a faith community. Churches can be reassured by the fact that the NT reflects communities that were rife with conflict and diversity. The fact that there are *four* Gospels, for example, is evidence of a church that found it necessary to embrace diversity.

The function of good leadership is not only to help the group identify the important issues that merit sustained attention, but also to help regulate the intensity and format for group processing. Heifetz compares this task to that of a cook adjusting heat under a pressure-cooker. “If the pressure goes beyond the carrying capacity of the vessel, the pressure cooker can blow up. On the other hand, with no heat nothing cooks.”<sup>21</sup> Leaders must help set the pace and flow of information to the group and must help organize the process of group decision-making. They must help the group do reality testing (think through the practical implications of various options) and be willing to self-differentiate (state their own convictions and insights in a non-threatening way that invites others to do the same).

Finally, in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for leadership to act decisively in autocratic ways, either because the time is too short for group process or because the group is not resilient enough to cope with the stress of decision-making. In normal group life, however, it is a sign of good leadership to “give the work back to the people” when a important corporate agenda must be decided.<sup>22</sup>

### **Vision-setting as a way to empower the church**

Businessman-turned-theologian Philip Lewis’s *Transformational Leadership: A New Model for Total Church Involvement* defines power as “the capacity to influence others to do something they would not have done without being influenced.”<sup>23</sup> Exercise of power that transforms a group toward maturity always involves *empowering others*. The task of leaders is to impart knowledge, skills, information, resources, and support that will enable others to address problems or challenges.

Helping the church articulate and own a vision is perhaps the most empowering task leaders can perform. Underlying most vision in the early

church was a firm conviction that the end of history was near. God was about to redeem a fractured creation and make all things new in Jesus Christ. Virtually all major innovations or costly changes of behavior in the early church (communal economy, the mission effort, and love of enemies) were rooted in this Christian eschatology. Implications of Christian eschatology are not limited to the future; the church starts living *now* the way all of humanity someday will live in the Reign of God. The central task of leaders in the early church was to articulate where history was headed because of Jesus Christ, and to call believers to embody that future now by leading lives “worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:10).

Leading worthy lives will require a variety of short-term steps, and here effective leaders must help the church shape vision. Philip Lewis describes a vision-creating process that oscillates between a congregational leader setting out vision and seeking insights or response from the congregation.<sup>24</sup> Transformational leaders become “communications champions,” consistently and repeatedly setting out group objectives in ways that inspire and energize.

### **Summary**

Effective church leaders are more than facilitators; they are *initiators* who remain accountable to God, to the scriptures, and to members of the church. They are *visionaries* who constantly compare what *is* with what *could be* by the grace of God. They are *conflict managers* who build so much trust and respect into group decision making that church members are free to express any idea or concern.

Authority for this kind of leadership comes from Christ himself, which means leaders will act with the apparent powerlessness of the cross. There will be no coercion or manipulation, just the grace-filled examples of leaders who speak their own convictions with clarity and love. There will be no paralysis of interminable search for artificial consensus, nor the atrophy of imagination that comes with authoritarianism. Rather, leaders will skillfully help the church face problems, hear diverse perspectives, and seek Holy Spirit guidance to plot a course that is faithful to the scriptures and responsive to a breadth of concerns in the faith community.

**Postscript: Issues of power and authority facing the Mennonite Church today**

During my first eighteen months as president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (1997-98), I tried to take the “power pulse” of the North American Mennonite church by engaging in scores of conversations about issues of leadership and authority. From Vancouver to Sarasota, I met with individuals and groups of Mennonite pastors, business leaders, educators, and others concerned about the future of the denomination. Typically I started discussion by asking, “What kind of leadership will the Mennonite church need to be effective as a denomination in the twenty-first century?” This was not a scientifically accurate survey, but it nevertheless brought into focus issues of power and authority that are urgent for the church to address. The following fifteen points summarize what I heard:

1. The Mennonite church needs leaders who can help congregations and conferences develop healthy decision-making processes and establish group goals (vision). Pastors need administrative and organizational skills, and must learn to think strategically (e.g., with mission statements, monitoring progress toward goals).

2. The Mennonite church needs an adequate understanding of authority in leadership after a generation when “priesthood of all believers” theology sometimes instilled the notion that leadership is inherently suspect or unnecessary; leaders need the capacity of realistic self-appraisal (strengths, weaknesses, how to compensate and grow).

3. The Mennonite church is less biblically literate than in recent generations. We need leaders who know the scriptures and can teach and inspire others.

4. With many opportunities for both acculturation and ecumenical involvement, there is an urgent need for Mennonites to cherish and strengthen core Anabaptist convictions such as those related to Christology, discipleship, mission, simplicity, peacemaking, and mutual aid.

5. There is a growing hunger in the Mennonite church for preaching that is effective, dynamic, and biblical.

6. The church needs leaders who can work creatively and redemptively with conflict and diversity, especially on issues of sexuality and Bible interpretation.

7. There is an opportunity and need for better dialogue and cooperation between minister-theologians and business people in the church. The church should help people in many professions understand their life work as part of the mission of the church.

8. There is an ongoing need to challenge young people to take up leadership in the church, and to mentor emerging leadership at all levels.

9. There is a danger that the Mennonite church will move too far in the direction of “professional ministry.” Ministers need skills to empower and enable others to grow in leadership ability.

10. In an increasingly pluralistic society, Mennonites need renewed commitment to mission, evangelism, and witness.

11. Mennonites in North America are becoming both more urban and more ethnically diverse. African-American/Canadian, Swiss-German, Hispanic, Russian, Asian, Native American/Canadian, and other ethnic Mennonite peoples need leadership training and need to be integrated into the denominational identity.

12. There is major numerical growth in the Mennonite church in two-thirds-world countries. Mennonites in North America need to learn about mission, spirituality, discipleship, and economics from sisters and brothers in other cultures.

13. Pastors and other leaders need opportunities and skills to think theologically (beyond generic practical ministry skills), integrating biblical teaching and Anabaptist convictions into the life of the church while being aware of broader theological perspectives in other denominations.

14. Too many Mennonite ministers are leaving the pastorate. Ministers need understanding of how to care for themselves emotionally and spiritually, and congregations need training in how to sustain and support leaders.

15. The gender balance of people preparing for pastoral roles in the denomination has shifted so rapidly toward women that we are in danger of



creating an environment in which men feel dis-empowered to exercise congregational leadership.<sup>25</sup> The Mennonite church needs to call and nurture approximately equal numbers of men and women for leadership roles.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Narry F. Santos, “The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (October-December 1997), 460.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Matt. 6:7; Luke 9:1; 1 Cor. 9:8. When Paul ventured an opinion that was not so derived, he understood that he no longer spoke with the same level of authority (1 Cor. 7:25; 2 Cor. 11:17).

<sup>3</sup> The following diagram and discussion of patronage are adapted from my book *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John’s Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 72-80.

<sup>4</sup> At Ephesus, for example, archeologists have found hundreds of inscriptions and plaques put in public places, in which clients honor or thank their patrons. This practice was pervasive in the first-century Roman world.

<sup>5</sup> The “friend” language for client-patron relationship is evident at the appearance of Jesus before Pilate, when accusers reminded Pilate of his patronage obligations: “If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor” (John 19:12).

<sup>6</sup> The fact that “not many” believers at Corinth came from socially or politically prominent backgrounds suggests that at least some did. One such case might be Erastus, who was “city treasurer” (Romans 16:23).

<sup>7</sup> For insights on the structure of 1 Peter, and the implications for power relationships, I am indebted to Mary H. Schertz, “Nonretaliation and the Haustafeln in 1 Peter,” in Willard M. Swartley, ed., *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 258-86.

<sup>8</sup> The lexical scope of this common word for authority in the New Testament is considerable, so the exact meaning must be interpreted in context. Possibilities include “freedom of choice, right to act, ability to do something, capability, might, power, authority, absolute power, warrant, ruling power, official power.” Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Church Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 277-79.

<sup>9</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guildford Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3. Friedman is not the first to draw a parallel between family systems and leadership in the faith community. Several New Testament authors note that qualified leaders in the church likely will be those who have functioned well in their own marriage and family systems (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12-13; cf. Titus 1:6).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>23</sup> Philip V. Lewis, *Transformational Leadership: A New Model for Total Church Involvement* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-102.

<sup>25</sup> Ordained men still far outnumber ordained women, and there remain many obstacles to women in leadership—including a significant number of congregations that will not call a woman to a lead pastoral role. Yet an apparent sea change is taking place in the gender balance of people *preparing* for ministry. At Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, for example, gender balance among students shifted as follows: In 1994-95 there were 62% men and 38% women in degree programs; in 1997-98 there were 43% men and 57% women in degree programs.

## Responses to Kraybill

(1) *Muriel Bechtel, Pastor*

*Warden Woods Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ontario*

I am grateful to Nelson Kraybill for providing us with such a rich biblical context to this complex question of power and authority, and for including both sides of the paradox. The examples from Jesus' life and ministry and Paul's writings remind us that they too had to make choices between power and vulnerability, between servanthood and authority.

I admit I still get a little nervous when church leaders address this topic. I was at an impressionable age in the early 1970s when the Mennonite church had its love affair with servanthood as *the* model for its leaders. As a young stay-at-home mother I loved sharing my gifts in the church. I was encouraged to serve in the church like everyone else but not to be responsible in using my gifts as a leader. The message I heard was that I should aspire to servanthood, not to leadership. I still remember vividly one Sunday when the pastor expounded from the pedestal where I and others had placed him on the virtues of servanthood and the call to empty oneself as Jesus did. The next morning I sat in my living room and prayed with tears streaming down my face: "Take away my desire to do these things. Help me have the same attitude that Jesus did, and empty myself of my proud ambition."

Today, as a white, educated, economically secure, heterosexual, Swiss Mennonite pastor I see things from another perspective. Now I need those reminders to be a servant, but then it was painful for me to embrace Jesus' self-sacrifice and powerlessness as my ideal. Now I recognize my freedom and responsibility to choose whether I act on behalf of others or myself. Today I need reminders to be willing to set aside the privilege of my position and my power to influence, as Jesus did, to be willing sometimes to make such sacrifices for a greater purpose—so that others will have space to grow in power and authority. Now I sometimes need to be reminded not to think of myself more highly than I ought.

There are people in all of our churches and organizations, indeed the world, who have been well-schooled in servanthood, in humility, in putting others first. It is "bred in their bones." They need to be encouraged to find

their voices and speak the truth that is in them. They need to hear that it is important not only to love their neighbor but also to love themselves; not only to listen to their leaders but also to value their convictions and hopes, though they may differ from ours.

One of the most common ways we exercise power is by the way we participate in dialogue, the way we speak and listen. As leaders we exercise our power and authority by being clear about our convictions. I suggest that we exercise vulnerability by “hearing others into speech,” by encouraging others to speak *their* views with clarity and conviction. In order to create that safe space where others can participate and even disagree with us, we leaders need to be constantly discerning and learning how and when to speak.

We need to know when to speak for ourselves and when to speak for the group. Kraybill pointed out an example of that in Acts 15, where first of all Paul and Silas and others expressed their personal opinions. Only later after much dialogue, did James, the elder in the Jerusalem church, offer a proposal to test whether in fact he was speaking for the group. If we speak only for ourselves, we abdicate our responsibilities as leaders. If we speak only for the group, we take others’ voices away from them, especially those who see things differently.

Truly mutual dialogue is a delicate balancing act of power and vulnerability, and it is prepared for the possibility for change in both parties. An example of this kind of dialogue is Jesus’ encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; Matt. 15:21-28). Their conflicting perspectives collided, and they both stated their convictions and their reasons. Though clearly she is the one with less power and authority, the woman holds her own. In the end, both are changed. Jesus is convinced, and the woman’s faith is confirmed because her daughter is healed.

### **Concerning men and women**

The observation about men who feel “disempowered” caught my attention, perhaps because it echoes concerns I have heard in our own congregation, mostly from women. A decade ago some of these women were starting to claim more of their power in the congregation. In many ways they were successful: they achieved many of the changes they wanted. In recent years, however, other changes have become evident. More women than men are

servicing on church committees and boards. Are these two issues related? “What’s happening to the men?” one woman asked. One answer is that the men in our congregation are in a men’s group that meets regularly to deal with men’s issues. One of the newer men has commented that he appreciates learning from others in the group about gentleness and being vulnerable. But he also misses the decisiveness and willingness to give leadership that he was used to from men in the past. Meanwhile the women’s group of a decade ago has disbanded. Many of those women are mothers, and involved in careers or preparing for professions. The men are sharing more in household and parenting responsibilities.

We are in the midst of massive change as we learn new ways of working together as colleagues and peers. Our differences as men and women certainly create challenges as we work together more. But I would like to believe that most of us share a desire for healthier partnerships that empower both women and men. Learning new patterns of relating is bound to be unsettling, awkward, and for a time, disorienting and disempowering. In-between times are usually times of feeling somewhat frustrated and uncertain.

I know from personal experience that backing away from each other to find a safe space has been needed at times. But I am saddened when fear and anger become our abiding place and keep us from claiming the promise of truly mutual relationships that is provided “in Christ” (Gal. 3:28). We need each other, and we need each other’s gifts. I am convinced that beyond the frustration and pain there is the possibility of a new day; a day we help to create each time we exercise our power and authority alongside each other with both conviction and vulnerability. Kraybill’s paper has laid out the kind of groundwork needed for that possibility to become a reality. The work of translating it into action is before us.

(2) *Marcus Shantz*

*Graduate Student, Law, University of Toronto*

I would like to begin to consider a few of the current issues Nelson Kraybill identifies in light of the New Testament model he described.

1. Kraybill mentions that across North America, pastors need to take better care of themselves, and their congregations need to take better care of them. Many pastors are leaving the ministry. I wonder whether part of this problem is that our reading—or misreading—of the New Testament sometimes leads us to an unhealthy and joyless asceticism. This is not only an issue for pastors. Mennonite young people, students, and service workers are particularly susceptible. Yes, we should expect our leaders to follow Jesus' example as best they can. Yes, Jesus was a servant, he was poor, and he suffered to the point of death. But he didn't live that way *every day*; suffering had its time and place. Jesus made jokes. He took time off, alone. He enjoyed a good party. He indulged the occasional extravagance. He once gave wine to people who already had too much to drink. He even took a little criticism from followers of John the Baptist, seemingly for enjoying life too much.

When we forget this celebrative side of Jesus, we end up with pastors and church leaders who have difficulty nurturing anything but guilt in themselves. We may end up with congregations and agencies that inflict suffering on leaders—and their families—instead of offering support to carry on. And we end up with earnest but humorless young people, huddled around the *More-With-Less Cookbook* making soybean pie. They may be eating righteously, but are they able to celebrate?

2. Kraybill identifies a need for Mennonites to develop an awareness of the theological positions of other denominations. I wonder whether the New Testament calls us to more than a simple "awareness." If the Acts story of vigorous debate among diverse Christians is normative, why are most Mennonites still largely ambivalent about ecumenical dialogue? If we Mennonites have something good, why not share it in conversation with other denominations? And why not risk being transformed by the good gifts of other Christians? For example, the contemplative practices of the Catholics and Anglicans—retreats, daily prayers, and spiritual direction—might help Mennonite leaders take better care of themselves. Ecumenical dialogue does

need to be approached with care; for Mennonites in certain parts of the world, the memory of oppression by other Christians is still fresh. We should be cautious, but we should also be faithful to our calling to actively engage other Christians.

3. Another of Kraybill's points [in his Postscript] is the need for North American Mennonites to learn from Mennonites in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. I agree completely. Yet if the Church really is the place where power and resources are distributed evenly, where various members do not lord it over each other but relate as servants, then we may need to move beyond "learning." In fact, I think this is the biggest power and authority issue we face. How do we really treat each other? In North America, we have in the past assumed that we set the theological agenda for all Mennonites. Are we ready to respond to visionary leadership from Mennonites in other parts of the world? We have created agencies that gather our money for use around the world, but our agencies do not usually invite Mennonites from other parts of the world to help decide how the money should be used, much less whether the agency itself is a good idea. We have not made ourselves and our money accountable to the world church. Many of our agencies and institutions are working honestly on these questions. We need to encourage and support them as they begin to grasp the answers.

(3) *Henry Landes*

*Delaware Valley Family Business Center, Sellersville, Pennsylvania*

My reflections grow out of recent painful congregational and Conference experiences. During the past two years, my congregation went through a very difficult process which led to the termination of our associate pastor. Our elders and church council exercised power and authority which, save for a few exceptions, was basically affirmed by the congregation. Yet there was a huge cost in terms of the amount of time and emotional energy (guilt, anger, anxiety) required from all sides. Our elders, who carried the main responsibility in this messy matter, were wounded and weary, and within a few months the chair of church council resigned. Later in the same year, our

congregation faced another crisis. A Mennonite Youth Fellowship sponsor had an opportunity to join the Federal Bureau of Investigation. After his small group affirmed the pursuit of his lifelong dream, he met with the elders who did not affirm his joining the FBI. While there was some further dialogue, the conversations quickly polarized, leading to deep alienation with several members and attendees leaving the congregation. To use Shirley Showalter's phrase, we failed to find "the space so that people could talk."

My context also includes the wrenching process that the congregations of the Franconia Mennonite Conference have experienced in the last few years in dealing with the Germantown, Pennsylvania congregation. This process ultimately led to the expulsion of the Germantown congregation from Conference membership over their [acceptance of gays and lesbians as church members.] Personally, I was deeply disappointed, perhaps even disillusioned with the actions of leaders, delegates, members, and myself. Both of these crises represent the shadow side of our tradition. In the face of high conflict and anxiety, we moved away from our moorings in the heart of Jesus.

Nelson Kraybill has helpfully reviewed the biblical principles of leadership—attending, lifting, and loving in the spirit of Jesus. Kraybill reminds us of Friedman's call for leaders to be a non-anxious presence as they guide the discussion and action of a congregation, conference, or denomination. Certainly Jesus was a model of non-anxious presence. But how do we create and maintain a non-anxious presence in dealing with the flashpoints of our day such as homosexuality? How do leaders maintain confidence in themselves, in others, and in the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts 15 under extreme pressure from all sides? In my work with CEOs of companies, they often remark, "It's lonely at the top." Indeed, leadership is faced not only with loneliness but also high risk, whether in business or church.

In the face of a very anxious religious establishment, Jesus found out just how risky a "non-anxious presence" can be. Kraybill's review of Paul's life and teaching points to a somewhat more anxious presence and, of course, in a few centuries, that anxiety grew among Christian leaders who increasingly accepted the "sword" as a necessary part of "saving" the world. I remember John Howard Yoder frequently saying that Christians don't have



to make history come out right. Can we claim that same confidence about “not making our congregations and conferences come out right?”

In his postscript, Kraybill notes there is a danger that the Mennonite church will move too far in the direction of “professional ministry.” How do “pastors as employees” hold a non-anxious presence? How do the leaders of our denominational agencies/schools speak their truth about highly controversial issues when they almost surely face minor or even major loss of financial support?

In view of painful experiences with the churches such as Germantown, what are we learning about creating space for discussion and mutual address between congregations? While the dispute in Acts 15 seems to have resolved rather neatly, at least at the meeting, how do we treat each other in the Spirit of Christ? Perhaps Bill Klassen’s reminder of Pilgram Marpeck’s deep reluctance to break fellowship can help us hold our non-anxious presence in leading our often anxious congregations into deeper connection and Bible study.

## Pilgram Marpeck and Our Use of Power

*William Klassen*

On April 8, 1998 in the Facts and Arguments page of the *Globe and Mail*, an Anabaptist (her self-description) widow ventilated her reactions to the suicide of her youngest son ten years ago who had announced, upon the death of his father, that he was gay. Upon consideration of the family's course of action, the mother recalled she and her remaining three sons had decided "that the old Anabaptist practice of 'shunning' might be helpful." By her own admission it seemed the only time she had ever discussed the matter with her sons, nor did she expect they would ever discuss it again. One could not help but rub one's eyes in disbelief that here apparently was a family who had only talked about what the funeral had cost them, while at the same time the mother displayed no qualms about speaking freely of their family tragedy in Canada's national newspaper.<sup>1</sup> She wanted readers to know that in an hour of great need she and her remaining sons could draw from their Anabaptist heritage a strategy to cope with a difficult dilemma. "We decided to treat Ken as if he didn't exist." One Easter Sunday as an Easter gift he returned home, put an end to his life, and now really does no longer exist.

Why did this household learn from their tradition such harshness—and indeed practice the cruelty of shunning towards a boy who, once his father was dead, thought he could now approach his mother with what must have been a soul-wrenching dilemma? The mother apparently had no heart to bear her son's burden, no ear to hear his painful cry. She had only the tattered remains of "an Anabaptist heritage." But is not her dilemma that of the Mennonite fellowship at large? We read about congregations impatient with conference officials because they would like to have a bit more dialogue before they excommunicate congregations who allow gays as members.

Whatever the disciplinary issue, all who would claim Anabaptist allegiance need to consider a leader with impeccable credentials, named

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*William Klassen works as a fund-raising consultant for a Dominican Biblical research centre in Jerusalem.*

Pilgram Marpeck. Marpeck's use of power within community could serve us well as a model. He urged Anabaptists to be slow in judgment and to delay excommunication as long as possible—at least until you are prepared to feel the pain of losing a member of your body. As he says:

In the freedom of Christ Jesus the Lord I find comfort, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, and nothing else. Everything that commands, forbids, institutes, orders, drives or produces anything against this freedom brings quarrelling, wrong understandings, zeal, strife, and unrest in heart and conscience. Such strife only produces a restless, seared uncertain conscience without the true peace of God.<sup>2</sup>

Let me expand on some allusions to Marpeck and his group which were offered to the power conference last year: the use of power in the case of discipline involving Helene von Freyberg.<sup>3</sup> Its importance stems from the role played by a woman from the nobility whose wealth gave her a certain prestige and power. We are blessed with a first-hand account from her, a document found in the *Kunstbuch* recently translated and analyzed by Linda Huebert Hecht, who also placed the document in its historical context.<sup>4</sup> It is a case in which power—the power of forgiving—appears to be used to good advantage by the one accused and those whom she feels she has wronged, Pilgram and Valentine. Hecht locates some of the language within the history of spirituality and offers an interpretation of the most difficult word in the confession.<sup>5</sup> She suggests that the sin committed had to do with the regional government officials. Most likely what happened is that Helene temporarily recanted her faith, and for this she was held accountable by the leadership of the group, among whom Marpeck held a leading role.

Pilgram Marpeck lived as a faithful follower of Jesus in the immediacy of worldly obligations. He was never employed by the Church, but always either by the city of Rattenberg (1525-28), even directly by the Emperor (1527-28), by the city of Strasbourg (1528-1532), or by Augsburg (1544-1556). Most of the time he was very well paid and apparently was both a wealthy and a generous man. He was fired for not obeying orders which he considered improper for a Christian to carry out (he believed it was not the role of the state to interfere in matters of religious belief)—for refusing to

discontinue his publishing and organizing of believers into a community of faith in Strasbourg—and he was harassed in Augsburg. He did not avoid ambiguity—but neither did he sell out to the establishment. He rejected pat formulae, and sought together with his very active fellowship to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Above all, he followed Paul in turning aside all false piety which seeks to outdo the other in detecting sin and banning the sinner. This presumed “sanctity or godliness” which prides itself in submitting to regulations needs to be rebuked, and reminded that such regulations have an appearance of wisdom in promoting “self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence” (Col. 2:23, NRSV).

In the late 1950s scholars like Robert Friedmann and Harold Bender raised questions about Marpeck’s approach. As evidence had accumulated both of the wealthy position Marpeck had attained and of the wealth of one of his colleagues, Leopold Scharnschlager, it was natural to ask whether Marpeck actually practiced Anabaptism. Was he perhaps a “silent” Anabaptist, a conventicle type who might meet in salons or even perhaps beer halls to discuss religious issues, but unable himself to walk the path of discipleship? One might then speak of a “Marpeckkreis,” a circle, but hardly of a genuine fellowship.

Stephen Boyd’s conclusions on Marpeck’s position on justice would seem to be an adequate reply to those critics:

[Marpeck’s] appropriation of ideas from these diverse traditions . . . had as one of its central organizing principles his own sense of vocation to “redeem the world” to be diligent in all things unto the fulfilment of all justice, not only internally before God, but also externally before humanity.<sup>6</sup> . . . His thought might be described, then, as a social, or even a political, theology of the cross . . . . [This] social theology of the cross served [his community] in two significant ways: First, It gave them a meaningful theological context in which to understand their own suffering. Second, Marpeck’s theology provided those in his sphere of influence with a new sense of identity, worth, and dignity.<sup>7</sup> . . . In the last phase of his life, Pilgram Marpeck experienced some of the sixteenth century’s most important events—[religious and political]. His

professional obligations and religious activities brought him into contact with [a very large cross section of citizens] from every social class. From his vantage point of an apartment in the middle of the city of Augsburg and the water tower at its edge, Marpeck observed the political struggle for control of the city and the empire—a struggle often justified in the name of the true faith and the church, but fought by many who had little influence in that church or in political life.<sup>8</sup>

Marpeck coined a formula which he employed in many contexts: “a spiritual real justice” (*geistlicher wesentlicher gerechtigkeit*), and it expressed for him the personal and social transformation which took place when the cross of Christ was accepted. Then all the damage Adam’s fall has wrought is undone for all nations and heathens, and thus the die is made true, the balance is just, and the earth has justice.<sup>9</sup> Boyd translates: he brings everything to order. Marpeck builds on the Old Testament view of justice, citing both Isaiah and Jeremiah 33, where God is called the just one; and Jeremiah predicts that the order and justice of God will be restored to all the people. All of our injustice will be undone by Jesus. For Marpeck, this is both a personal and a social statement.

The hope for this restoration resides in the new community. The good deeds of the truly believing community, preaching, teaching, miracles, baptism, and discipline, serve as a necessary preparation and mediator of the Holy Spirit. That community is the true spring from which eternal life flows. Through it the Holy Spirit flows into the hearts of all believers and secures them, thereby releasing them from the hopeless task of securing themselves. The Holy Spirit comes from outside, grants us participation in the communal and divine life, and thus secures the human spirit in a transcendent reality. The believer participates in the first resurrection. Because of the grace of Christ—this free outgoing of Christ’s power from above—death is no longer death, but through faith in Christ we are carried through death with the love that is stronger than death.

The Holy Spirit’s power to maintain the believer in the life-giving relationship with the divine is greater than the power of death to separate the believer from that participation. Therefore, no one can overpower us again with the deceit of our self-obsessed love of ourselves and the idolatrous love

of creatures by which we, in a disorderly way, loved against God's will and our neighbor. Secured by a reality greater than the self, the believer is freed from the slavery of sin—that is, from the attempt to secure the self in the world by anxious grasping. In the Christian community the believer is free to serve the neighbor out of free grace, and freed from the compulsion to serve the self by taking from the neighbor or serving for a reward.

For Marpeck, freedom is that unconstrained receptivity and giving made possible by participation in the communal, and thereby in the divine, life. The Holy Spirit, poured out in the cross of Christ, grants participation in the love and friendship of God and effectuates a real, supernatural, spiritual life. Often Marpeck returns to Johannine co-inherence language to describe this participation: "We know that Christ Jesus is in God, the Father and God, the Father, is in Jesus Christ . . . and we know, acknowledge and also feel that Christ is in us and we are in Christ and remain so in eternity."<sup>10</sup>

Marpeck saw the "weapons of justice" or righteousness as of supreme importance. This term is used by Paul in 2 Cor. 6:7 (compare Rom. 13:12, armor of light, and Ephesians 6 and the armor of God).<sup>11</sup> The Holy Spirit pours into the hearts of the believers and

reproduces and recapitulates the perfect law of freedom of Christ effecting purity of mind and heart. The human spirit then leads the body and flesh into a purification and cleansing of sin making both body and flesh weapons of justice. By receiving the spirit, one's whole being is reordered and the Christian, who is part of the humanity of Christ, becomes an agent of Christ's justice in the world, through the concrete acts of his or her body.<sup>12</sup>

More difficult to answer was the possibility that since some Swiss groups had banned him, this indicated Marpeck was not a genuine Anabaptist. The ultimate test was that no body of believers had survived which bore his name. This was seen as a sure judgment of history that he was not a genuine Anabaptist. The evidence in the form of letters to the Swiss and others, in which Marpeck delineated their differences, throws considerable light on the matter. As far as I can tell, however, no one has done the detailed study necessary here. What is needed is research into the nature of conflict between the early Anabaptists, including the issues which divided the Hutterites from

the Marpeck fellowship, the Swiss and their substantive accusations against Marpeck.

The second area in which Marpeck can help us walk the path of faithfulness is that of power and powerlessness. In an essay on the limits of the state in Marpeck's thought,<sup>13</sup> I sought to depict his position for it seemed to me then, as indeed it still does, that we have something more to learn on the subject: How do we use power with each other? How do we judge the use of power by the state? Lawrence Burkholder urges us to read Paul Tillich on love, justice, and power.<sup>14</sup> Having done so, I still believe that Marpeck has something to say on that topic, and again it comes from his intense involvement in those questions. He was a leader who engaged the powers with a degree of faithfulness which may surprise us. Moreover, I suggest that in our search for positive models in our history we can still learn from Pilgram. It was his attractiveness as a model which helped keep me in the Mennonite Church for many years.<sup>15</sup>

Marpeck can serve as our dialogue partner. Throughout his active life Marpeck engaged in dialogue with the Reformers, Bucer and Capito, and with all branches of Anabaptists available to him. His sustained efforts to dissuade the Hutterites from banning people because they disagreed with them on private property; his vigorous efforts to bring the Swiss around to be more open in negotiating such matters as recognizing the state's role in marriage, the role of women, the oath, etc.; but above all his extensive writings demonstrate his desire to engage in active discussion of issues pertaining to the Christian life. Marpeck believed in the reality of Christ's body as members rebuked each other and cared for each other. Ever vigilant that the Devil might take advantage of human proclivities towards both legalism and libertinism, he sought refuge in open communication among believers. His legacy, hard as it may seem to appropriate, is desperately needed in the Mennonite family.

According to Stephen Boyd, Marpeck appropriated ideas from many sources in the various contexts in which he found himself—those of Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Spiritualists, Theologia Deutsch, et al.: in his own words Marpeck sought “to be diligent in all things unto the fulfilment of all justice, not only internally before God, but also externally before humanity.” Personal repentance and social justice faithfully meshed together. For Marpeck, the

realm of Christ, constituted by that justice, encompassed both individual and social transformation—one was impossible without the other.

Because of Marpeck's sense of the spiritual and physical interdependence of human life, the individual and communal transformations within the new community had political implications beyond the conventicle. Boyd argues that Marpeck developed a social or even a political theology of the cross, not in the sense of Dorothy Soelle but in the more general sense of the "deprivatising of theology wherein theology cannot be isolated from its social, political, and economic spheres."<sup>16</sup>

\David Flusser, an orthodox Jew living in Jerusalem and one of today's leading New Testament scholars, recently published a revised edition of his Jesus book.<sup>17</sup> This fascinating work is dedicated to his "Mennonite friends." Over the years Flusser has met many Mennonites, and his North American tour in the early 1980s included lectures in Goshen-Elkhart and Winnipeg. Clarence Bauman and he spent many hours together, and both were deeply influenced by Jesus' reading of the love commandment. Indeed, Flusser says he dedicated the book to the Mennonites because they were one of the few Christian groups who are vitalized by the love teaching and religion of Jesus.<sup>18</sup>

At a recent meeting, Flusser spoke of a Mennonite acquaintance, a teacher who had been fired from a Mennonite school, because that teacher's wife had left him for another man and divorced him. Genuinely puzzled, Flusser asked whether such a thing was possible in the Mennonite church. He had also heard that there were some congregations which did not permit gays or lesbians as members, and again he wondered what form of gospel is being preached to such people. "How then do you assure them that Jesus lived and died also for them?" Such questions are not easy to answer. But they are at the heart of the main question: How do love and power come together in our community? They deserve an answer.

Mennonites at the cusp of the twenty-first century need the peace that comes to a discerning community. They also need to listen to Marpeck's clarion call to be slow to judge and quick to embrace the brother or sister for whom Christ died.

Premature judging, the rush to arrive at a verdict, the false pride that comes from breaking off dialogue—all of these Marpeck, in a letter, warned



his Swiss colleagues to abjure: “True believers are forbidden to condemn all these people before the right time (1 Cor. 4:5), that is, until their fruit, which is open vice, appears.”<sup>19</sup> “Whoever presumes to decide and judge, before the revealing of guilt, is a thief and a murderer (John 10:1). He runs ahead of Jesus Christ, who alone is the revealer of good and evil in the heart.”<sup>20</sup> He concludes his letter with the words:

I have written to you in the hope that God, through his child Jesus Christ will grant us the ability to recognize one another in Christ Jesus with a clean conscience. For all schism, discord, and uncertain consciences come, in part, from one’s own understanding, flesh and blood, which mixes itself into the knowledge of God. Every moment, I am conscious of this in myself, for division does not come from the Spirit of Christ . . . I desire the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be given to all who long for it.<sup>21</sup>

Pilgram Marpeck spanned the time from 1526 to 1546, thus bridging the gap into the second generation of Anabaptism. He does not hold the answers to all our questions. Nevertheless, he provides evidence that a commitment to a community living under God’s covenant can confront the world, and can provide both a haven for those who need it and a source of energy and wisdom for those who are baffled by the complexity of modern and postmodern life or who are fatigued. God gave Marpeck a fine critical mind which he used to enrich both his fellow citizens and his “fellow comrades in the tribulations which are in Christ.” We could do worse than to heed his warnings and follow his example.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “For They Know What they Do,” by Edna Weber. *Globe and Mail*, Facts and Arguments page, April 8, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> W. Klaassen and W. Klassen, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, hereafter WPM (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976), 313, in a letter written to the Swiss in 1531 (1541?). For a succinct and accurate introduction to Marpeck and his role within Anabaptism, see C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995): chapter 9 and especially chapter 23, 327-37.

<sup>3</sup> The salient facts of her life are covered in Robert Friedmann, “Helene von Freyberg,”

*Mennonite Encyclopedia* II, 397; W. Klassen, "Helene von Freyberg" *Mennonite Encyclopedia* IV(Suppl):1085-86. Her relevance for modern discussions of church discipline and forgiveness is noted in W. Klassen, *The Forgiving Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 181.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Huebert Hecht, "An Extraordinary Lay Leader: The Life and Work of Helene of Freyberg, Sixteenth Century Noblewoman and Anabaptist from the Tirol," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 66.3 (1992): 312-41.

<sup>5</sup> The word was either Hände (=Hands) or Hünde (= Dogs) etc. The ambiguity led to considerable variety in the hypotheses trying to name the sin she had committed.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen B. Boyd, *Pilgram Marpeck: His Life and Social Theology*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 169. See my review in *The Catholic Historical Review* (April, 1994): 352-53.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-72.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>9</sup> As the Froschauer Bible puts it: Die billigkeit wilich widerumb in die schnur richten und das recht in die waag. NEB: "I will use justice as a plumb-line and righteousness as a plummet" (Isaiah 28:17; cf. 42: 1, 3, 4, where everything is made right. Mark 7:37 attributes this "making things right" to Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> Boyd, *Marpeck*, 154-55.

<sup>11</sup> One of Marpeck's favorite texts was 2 Cor. 10:1-6, with its rich military imagery.

<sup>12</sup> Boyd, *Marpeck*, 155.

<sup>13</sup> "The Limits of Political Authority as Seen by Pilgram Marpeck," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 58 (1982): 342-64.

<sup>14</sup> L.J. Burkholder, "Nonresistance, Nonviolent Revolution, and Power," in J.R. Burkholder and Cal Redekop, eds., *Kingdom, Cross, and Community* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976), 137. The fine contribution Burkholder has made to the Mennonite quest for identity can be seen in Rodney Sawatsky, ed., *The Limits of Perfection* (Waterloo, ON: Pandora Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> See my contribution "A Joyous Service among the Children of Peace" in Harry Loewen, ed., *Why I am a Mennonite* (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1988): 154-64.

<sup>16</sup> Compare, Boyd suggests, the early work of Johannes Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World*, 110.

<sup>17</sup> David Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997). Revised edition with Stephen Notley available in the United States from Eisenbraun's, Winona Lake, Indiana.

<sup>18</sup> Flusser, *Jesus*, 177.

<sup>19</sup> Marpeck, *WPM*, 323.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 325. See also 331.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

## Stories of Power and Money

(1) *Barb Burkard, Community Resource Coordinator  
House of Friendship, Kitchener, Ontario*

Talking about feelings around money in a church setting is a difficult task! Ask me about my feelings about money and I have no difficulty in giving you an answer, annotated, with references and footnotes. But ask me to talk about money *in a church setting* and suddenly I don't know what to say. I am afraid. Afraid I won't be heard, afraid I will offend, afraid that if I make myself vulnerable I will once again be hurt. But if we don't talk about it, how can anything change?

A number of years ago I approached the church to help me purchase a house. I was attending university full time, depending on student loans and grants to pay living expenses. I was living in a house I had purchased with my brother and sister-in-law, but the house was to be sold. If I did not put the money I got out of it into another house immediately, I would not qualify for any further government assistance, and by the time I finished my degree I would have no money left. I consulted a financial planner from a major financial institution, and I talked with the manager of the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union. They both agreed that the best thing to do was to put my money back into a house. The Credit Union manager said they would give me a mortgage if I would ask my church to back me up.

I went to the church. There it was decided that I should meet with the pastoral support committee and Bob Veitch of the Mennonite Foundation of Canada to review the situation. I did not really understand why this was necessary, but as they had the money/power and I did not, I agreed to follow their procedure.

The day of this meeting was one of the most painful days of my life. I went to the meeting, I laid my financial situation out for all to see. I do not remember what Bob's response was or that of the rest of the committee. I do know that I left the meeting feeling completely overwhelmed by life. Since my husband's death about four years earlier, I had struggled with depression and despair. I knew as I drove home that afternoon that I was at a breaking point. I wanted to die. I called a friend who came and stayed with me that

night. It was a long time before I could look at that incident and understand what had hurt me so badly.

One definition of trust is “a confident reliance on the integrity, honesty, veracity, or justice of another.” It was the total lack of trust I felt from the church that day that devastated me. I felt that those people, who were representing the whole church, did not have any confidence in my ability to order my own affairs, to plan wisely, or to handle money. They did not seem to know or care how I had struggled over the last several years to support my family on very small amounts of money. In fact, it appeared to me at that time that their care for their money far outweighed their care for me. When they couldn’t trust me, I doubted myself, my ability to be in control of my own life.

Why was I not trusted? Was it because I was a woman—moreover, a woman without a man attached? Because I was poor? Do we assume if someone has no savings it is because they cannot handle money? Do we believe the poor do not deserve a house, a car, a microwave, a ... (you fill in the blank)? How do we feel about money, about the people who have money, about the people who don’t have it?

There is an idealistic part of me that wants to believe that the church is different than most of society, that in the church money does not automatically give power, that those with money are not treated differently than those without. But that has not been my experience. I believe the key to healthier attitudes towards money in a church setting is trust. Trust comes out of relationship.

Immediately after my husband died, very good friends of mine came to me and said, “What do you need financially to be comfortable?” I told them, explaining my income and expenses and showing the imbalance. They immediately gave me six checks dated for the next six months for that amount of money. They never asked me for an accounting of the money. They did not question how I would spend it, because they knew me and loved me and trusted me. When I started working four months later, I gave the two remaining checks to Mennonite Central Committee.

I wish the church could be more like these friends. First, it must know and understand the relationship it (the church) has with money. Then, it must know, love, and trust the people it has opportunity to give to. When we are in a two-way relationship, there is less risk of abuse from either side, from the giver or the receiver.

(2) *Robert Veitch, Financial Consultant*

*Mennonite Foundation of Canada, Kitchener, Ontario*

We live in a society that touches us daily, and our experiences with our world and its people influence us deeply. It is our interactions with the world and the people around us that largely make us who we are. We are indeed part of all that we have met. Ultimately, however, as Christians we are called to make choices about the influences and experiences that will predominate in our lives. We have the power to make choices for ourselves, to choose which influences we will absorb into our very beings and which we will reject because of our allegiance to God, who revealed a new way of living through the example of Christ who rejected power and wealth for himself when it was offered.

There are at least four major categories of influence on our lives, as outlined below.

### **Mom, Dad and the playground**

The influence which Mom and Dad exert on us in our early years is very large indeed. I learned that you put in a hard day's work without grumbling. That you spend your hard-earned money with great care. That you save a little for rainy days. That you pay your way without borrowing. That you share with others who need your help. It was a simple philosophy from two working-class people with little money and basically no power. So it seemed. However, these simple "truths" have profound meaning for me even today.

Another early influence is our interactions on the playground as children. Things learned in these formative years will stay with us almost as indelibly as the lessons of home. I remember buying a new bicycle—with dual saddle bags, no less. I was the envy of many of the kids in the neighborhood. Suddenly, they wanted to hang around with me, hoping to get to ride my bike. I soon realized I could elicit favors from them in return for letting them ride it. Later in my teen years, my status as a good athlete brought many friends and favors, such as free equipment and good seats at sporting events.

Since those early influences, my simple beginning to life has become much more complicated. By experience, I learned that some friendships are

shallow and self-serving. A line of credit made some sense. Borrowing to make investments was prudent. Having money and things creates power and influence in our lives, and allows us to make choices. The more money and things we have, the more able we are to get people to do favors for us and the more things “go our way.”

### **The Church**

In the church I learned that generosity, love, humility, and contentment, among other qualities, are important to have. However, I also soon learned that money, power, and pride are used there as well to the advantage of individuals. I have been in situations where money and power could have been used to correct injustices but were not, and where a few of the wealthy made most of the decisions. Secular views of money and power too often predominate in the church and affect our decision-making.

With money and things too quickly comes a feeling of entitlement. “This is what I have achieved and this is what I have gained. Now, give me a little respect!” But the Scripture says, “When you are wealthy and powerful, remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to be wealthy and powerful” (Deut. 8:18). How we use this power and wealth must be determined by our response to God’s call for us to be faithful.

### **The world around us**

I am currently taking a management course at Conestoga College. In one class our instructor asked us to list the advantages and disadvantages of being managers. We were almost unanimous in listing money and power at the top of the list of advantages. In further discussion, the clear sentiment emerged that with power and money one can get more power and more money.

In addition, other perks that go with having money and power were listed. “Take every advantage you can get,” the instructor suggested, “and don’t worry what your fellow workers think—you deserve everything you can get.” What emerged clearly was that the element of greed was the driving force behind this equation. Is it not greed that has become the primary motivator in North American society? The desire for wealth has become an epidemic, if not endemic, because the learned assumption is that power will

follow. Lotteries, the wealth management industry, and advertising tug at our appetites for money and power—and for more money and more power.

Upon reflection on the class, I was reminded of the admonition: “Be in the world, but not of the world.” We are called to permeate society with our presence and our witness to another way. But we are also called to be healers and not participants in its brokenness. We are called to live differently and to take our cues from beyond that world. If we flirt with the desire for money and power, then how will we be different?

I have no recollection of anyone in the church ever challenging me about how I deal with my money—about the spending choices I have made. This has taught me not to challenge others on their spending choices. Personal finances are very private and you just don’t talk about that area. Complete privacy and secrecy around our financial affairs breeds selfishness. This is a situation that must be corrected. The use of money has to do with our values, and values are personal. They have to do with our very “souls.” Challenges about spending habits therefore are challenges to our sense of “self,” and how dare anyone challenge my values as a fellow Christian? We must find ways to do it that will not violate personal integrity but will help us chart a direction that will lead to greater faithfulness to God’s calling.

### **Our lifestyles**

Most North American Mennonite churches are experiencing significantly diverging standards of living among their members. Our already entrenched secrecy about money and spending habits, and an ever-widening gap of affluence, are preventing us from dealing with the destructive aspects of money and power.

I was told a story about a woman who became wealthy through a very successful family business. As the family’s wealth increased, so did their acquisitions and ownership of things. Larger, more luxurious homes, more expensive vehicles, expensive toys for the children and the parents were perks of the new-found wealth and status. At first, the woman’s less affluent friends were excited to come visit in her progressively more opulent homes. However, as time passed, she noticed that she and her husband rarely received invitations from these friends to visit. A gulf was developing in their relationship and she began to feel uncomfortable, then lonely, and eventually

guilty. In an effort to remedy the situation, they sold their mansion and moved into an average house on another property they owned. Their wealth did not change, but their visual display did. Will this approach be enough? Will it restore friendships? Will it satisfy their own need for faithfulness with God's gifts?

A young voluntary service worker told me he found it hard to fit into the circle of friends at the Mennonite church he was attending. On Sunday after church, the young adults would often gather and decide to do something together. Frequently the planned activity would cost money, but his service allowance usually kept him from participating. Their discussions often centered on cottages, new cars, and other things someone had acquired or was contemplating purchasing. Since he had to decline participation in the group's activities many times, he was soon not invited and was left out, frustrated and lonely. He wondered aloud to me, "How can we in the church minister to the poor and broken if we cannot see and feel beyond our affluence?"

To disarm the power of money you need to "hang loose" with it, to be able to dispose of it freely. Not to be attached to it or to its accumulation in bigger and bigger barns. Not to let it rule your life. Used in the right spirit, it can become an offering to God for his purposes. It can become a token of fellowship, as in the sharing that happened in the early church in Acts, or in the collection for Jerusalem Christians.

The Bible invites us to use our gifts of wealth and power to bear fruit for God's kingdom and to bring justice in a world that needs help. This can only happen when money has ceased to be a rival power in our lives and has turned into kingdom currency. It matters what place we give it in our lives, how we get it, how we use it, how we manage it, and how we dispose of it. We dare not keep only our own counsel about our money and power, because our spirits too easily become selfish and proud. Christian people must talk more together about these things, so that together we can be more faithful.



# Power and Leadership

(1) *J. Lawrence Martin, Pastor*

*Breslau Mennonite Church, Breslau, Ontario*

## **Personal experience**

In 1920 my father and mother, Simon and Lydia, loaded their belongings and young daughter on a wagon in St. Jacobs, Ontario, and drove to the train station to go to Harrisonburg, Virginia. They were going to Eastern Mennonite School to train for church leadership. As they passed the Snyder Flour Mill in St. Jacobs, Simon's father, a deacon in the Old Order Mennonite community, stood at the corner of the street, and as they drove by he turned his back on them and did not wave. They were leaving the Old Order community and the established ways of leadership selection in the Order. It took many years for this rift in the family to be healed.

My parents possessed an inner call to congregational leadership stemming from a new religious experience. They intended to become missionaries. My parents were clearly responding to the inner authority of a call from God, mediated by the new community of believers at the St. Jacobs Mennonite church with whom they had recently associated. This call needed to be nurtured by training in the Bible School and College, established in Virginia in 1917 to prepare church leaders. This was a clear departure from the old patterns of community leadership designed to preserve the tradition and customs that held the Old Order together. A strong sense of personal call by God and training from sources outside the community were suspect in that community.

My mother took classes at Eastern Mennonite School along with my father, and together they formed a leadership team and functioned at the level appropriate for the time in three pastorates in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario. They made their living by farming, market gardening, and baking while raising seven children—three who married pastors and three who became pastors or missionaries.

A positive family attitude to the work and life of the church in spite of all of its weaknesses is a powerful influence and training experience for leadership.

The year was about 1947-48. The setting was a Sunday morning service in a little country church on the outskirts of Kitchener, Ontario. I was only a grade school child, yet that particular morning stands out in my memory. The church was going to decide on a new deacon for the congregation. There was an informal way for members to make their suggestions for leaders known to the pastor and bishop. Four candidates for deacon were selected. The bishop and pastor interviewed the four, and they were deemed appropriate for the role and so agreed to let their names be considered. The method used to select the new deacon was the lot. The congregation agreed to live with the outcome of the lot and so grant the person authority to exercise leadership power in their midst. In the days leading up to the decision, our family discussed how each candidate would contribute to or hinder the work of the congregation. I assume each family was doing the same. It was the process of people preparing themselves for however God would lead.

The day finally arrived, and four black hymn books were placed on the communion table. In one of the books was placed a piece of paper which said "Thou art the man!" As the time came for the lot, excitement mounted. I was sitting with other children in the front benches. We had a ringside seat as Bishop Shantz read the passage from Acts where the disciples selected Matthias by lot to replace Judas. The bishop prayed and then invited the four candidates each to come and take a book. Then each one brought his book to the bishop until the pronouncement "Thou art the man!" was made. Arlin Snider became our new deacon.

The community recognized the hand of God in the process leading up to and including the lot, but a feeling of skepticism could be detected as well. The new deacon was helped to get additional training for his lifetime of calling. This was one of the last times the lot was used in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario. Congregations were discerning other ways to call leaders.

The scene is the Christian Workers' Conference at the Missionary Campgrounds outside of Kitchener. During the Consecration Service on the final evening, young adults were challenged to hear the call of God for missionary and church leadership. These yearly events became the occasion in the late 1940s and '50s for calling pastors and missionaries. Two of my

siblings trace their call to the foreign mission field to those meetings, and two others their call to the ministry. As a teenager, I was watching from the sidelines. People who heard the inner call of God also then followed up with training in our church colleges and seminaries. These institutions became increasingly important.

**Reflection**

Present in these stories is an interplay between various kinds of power and authority. Martha Ellen Stortz, in her book *Pastor Power*, offers helpful models for understanding the various kinds of power that circulate in the church. There is the authority of the community which needs to be shared with the potential leaders for effective leadership power to occur. This collegial authority or “power with” exercised in co-action with others is necessary for effective leadership in a community.

The fact that a community is willing to share its authority with a trusted leader provides another form of power. There are times when a leader needs to exercise “power over” or prophetic leadership. Sometimes the “power over” is institutional, the power that the office brings with it. There are obvious abuses to this kind of power, but when the authority for it is granted by the community in conjunction with expressions of other kinds of power, it can help build the congregation.

There is also the inner personal and spiritual call of God which brings a personal authority and “power within.” This is a form of charismatic leadership. Without this power, leadership is ineffective and barren.

**Leadership training today**

I recently drafted a letter to all pastors in the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada (MCEC), asking them to suggest some persons in their congregation to invite to a church vocations exploration evening sponsored by the Conference, by the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, and by Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario. The congregational search for potential leaders goes on. We are looking for effective ways to call people to church leadership roles. Some of the former ways are no longer available to us.

In the 1970s a movement in the Mennonite Church was envisioned by key Conference leaders. It was called *Conference Based Theological Education* (CBTE). This vision implied that a significant part of leadership training needs to happen beyond the seminary classroom, and also that people unable to get to seminary can benefit from quality training. The heart of CBTE Ontario is adequate supervised field experience in both congregational and in community settings, and two basic integration courses where leadership experience is reflected on and spiritual disciplines are learned. Here students struggle with the issues of personal calling, spiritual strength, and pastoral identity; how to foster and accept the power of leadership granted from the community with which one ministers; and the place of prophetic or assertive power in an organization. These are the same issues present in the stories at the beginning. As I read formation papers of students, these issues recur constantly. The supervised formational experiences need to be seen in the context of a well-rounded education in Biblical, theological, historical, and cultural studies.

Another need has been emerging recently: theological and leadership training for bi-vocational ministry. An increasing number of lay persons want to become involved in congregational leadership teams while pursuing another vocation part-time as well. With this in mind, MCEC and Conrad Grebel College have developed a Ministry option as part of the College's Master of Theological Studies degree. This incorporates the best of the Conference-based education programs that have been part of our recent history.

### **Conclusion**

I conclude with another story. I returned to pastoral leadership after a number of years of being a leader in a church publishing company. I understand bottom line talk, profit and loss statements, management by objectives, and so on. I came back into the pastorate enamored by my business acumen and thought: "How lucky you are to have me. I can relate to you and talk your language. Surely I can be a benefit."

I view things now a little differently. I believe parishioners are not primarily interested in these skills I bring. They are wanting spiritual guidance above all. They want me to help them find "the face of God" in their

situations. They want me to pray with and for them and to teach them to pray. They want an understanding person who listens and can help them find perspective and prophetic insight. I believe that this kind of leadership needs to be at the center of congregational leadership. This spiritual ministry can be enhanced by a rich education in other fields and disciplines, but they dare not replace it.

(2) *Shirley H. Showalter, President*  
*Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana*

The story told by J. Lawrence Martin of the lot as a leadership selection method holds special resonance for me. While I identify with the idea of being called to leadership, I certainly did not experience the call in the same way. I did not draw a slip of paper saying “Thou art the woman” out of a book. However, I did hear my community call my name. I would wish that every young person would hear the church and the church college call him or her by name. The experience of being called sustains a leader even in the midst of conflict and challenge.

A recent event on the campus of Goshen College could serve as a case study on the exercise of power, authority, and leadership. It involved two sets of chalked messages on campus sidewalks. One group of students wrote slogans that attempted to communicate facts about homosexuality. Some members of the community were offended by these statements. Less than twenty-four hours after these first chalkings appeared, a set of vulgar, threatening anti-homosexual messages appeared on top of or next to the first set. We immediately washed the messages off the sidewalks, suspended all chalking, and denounced vulgarity and threats as unacceptable. We called for information so we could investigate and hold accountable all who had violated Goshen’s standards of community.

That investigation is ongoing in our campus judicial system, so I am not able to say more about it now. We held a forum for the whole campus on the subject of how we can bring marginalized voices into our community.

During the forum one of the most poignant voices was that of a lesbian student who had been very vocal about the fear the chalked messages had instilled in her. She said to all of us, “When you look at me, all you see is a

lesbian because I have not been silent. But what I really am is a person. All I want is the opportunity to be human just like you.”

At the conclusion to the forum our campus minister arranged for any who wished to join her in a candle lighting ceremony to pick up a candle, think of one concrete action they could take to bring peace and healing to our campus, and pray for the courage to take that step as they placed the candle in the sand.

I felt a voice inside calling me to take action with the candle itself. I joined the line and picked up a candle and lit it. Instead of placing it in the sand, I took it with me to the lesbian student sitting close to the front who had spoken about being human. I silently offered my candle to her. She opened her arms, began to cry, and embraced me. She was wearing a rainbow colored jacket which asked the question “What would Jesus do?” As I hugged her back, I said, through my own tears, “Yes. That is the question. What would Jesus do?” How can we learn to speak to each other instead of at each other?

Let me turn now to the remarks I intended to make before this event occurred. I am part of Goshen College today because of a particular program, which, among other purposes, is also a leadership development program. It is called the Study Service Term (SST), and this year we celebrate its thirtieth birthday. We will send our 6,000th student abroad this winter on a voyage that has become a rite of passage for students at Goshen. They go to a significantly different culture, usually a country in the Caribbean, Central America, Asia, or Africa. They learn a new language, live with host families, study the culture using both traditional (books, lectures, tests) and experiential (field trips, service, journal) methods. As a faculty member I went with my husband Stuart, also a Goshen College faculty member, and our children to two SST locations. In 1981-82 we went to Haiti. In 1993 we went to Cote d’Ivoire, West Africa. These experiences convinced us that deep learning—head, heart, spirit, hands—is the kind of learning we want to give our lives for. It also produced in us an appreciation for the Mennonite Church. The reason Goshen College took a huge risk in 1968 by redesigning its curriculum and calendar to create an international service-learning program was that the faculty understood the value of such learning in their own lives. And they had leaders who did the hard work of using that experience to create a viable program.

It was Civilian Public Service (an alternative work program for conscientious objectors during the Second World War) and the post-World War II wave of relief work that instructed our faculty and gave them vision, moral purpose, keen minds, and open hearts to create and sustain such a program. To this day other institutions inquire about what we do, hoping to imitate it. Most of them turn away sorrowfully, like the rich young ruler, because they see how many structural, philosophical, and financial obstacles they would have to overcome. I will end this condensed description by saying that when the church acts out of its deepest convictions, such as peacemaking and service, we in education benefit if we use that experience creatively. We must bring our interest in academic rigor together with the teachings of Christ as interpreted by the church. When we do this well, we do indeed create “servant leaders” for “the church and the world,” as our mission statement says.

Despite such positive outcomes of church higher education, we might nevertheless refer to what we could call a leadership dearth. Let me put it to you starkly, from my biased perspective.

1. Most Mennonite youth have become almost completely acculturated into the middle and upper-middle class in North America. Education has played a prominent role in this change. While a small minority of Mennonites attended college as recently as the 1960s, the majority is now entering post-secondary education. Yet the percentage attending Mennonite colleges has decreased. We educate about 13 percent of all Mennonite youth in Mennonite colleges (U.S. Mennonite Church statistics). I would doubt very much if General Conference Mennonite or Canadian statistics were higher.

2. This does not mean our colleges are not doing well. The latest round-up in the *Mennonite Weekly Review* said that there were nearly 7,000 students in U.S. Mennonite colleges and that the number is going up overall. Goshen College was part of the story of increase, going up by 50 full-time students this fall. We also had an entering class of 65 percent Mennonites, one of the highest percentages of a denominational college in the United States.

3. The mission boards, seminaries, and Voluntary Service programs have an important role in developing leaders as well. One bright light is the Ministry Inquiry Program. Interest is high in this internship experience during the summers. Last year fourteen Goshen students participated. Overall, about

200 students from many Mennonite colleges over ten years have participated.

4. The bottom line? We all could do a lot better. We could create more and more imaginative partnerships with other agencies. We could cooperate more with each other in the U.S. and Canada. We could do distance education and involve the worldwide church. I believe this generation of presidents will accomplish some of these dreams. We *are* talking.

5. We need to think more about leadership, power, and authority. I think Mennonites are still searching for ways to use power for the common good. How can we take what we learned by being intentionally powerless for many years, and teach about power so that we ourselves and our students can live with it as well as live without it? One is not ready to accept a position of great power before one comes to a place in life where external power diminishes in value and internalized spiritual power increases in our minds, hearts, and spirits.

I offer two hypotheses. Jean Hagberg, in her book, *Real Power*, describes a six-stage process of moving from (1) Powerlessness to (2) Power by Association to (3) Power by Symbols to (4) Power by Reflection to (5) Power by Purpose to (6) Power by Gestalt. Very few people actually arrive at stage six (Hagberg uses Mother Teresa and Gandhi as examples). The materialist culture around us encourages us to focus on stage 3.

One way to view our problem with power as Mennonites is that we try to move backwards on Hagberg's model from "Powerlessness" to "Power by Gestalt" without admitting that we do and can traverse stages 2 and 3 first. Can we learn to trust our need for stages 2 and 3 without sanctifying materialism? For now, I leave this in the form of a question. We need stronger roles for elders, and poets, the saints among us. We need to go back to the folk wisdom and connect it to our postmodern age.

Secondly, the leadership *content* challenge of our time cannot be solved without paying attention to *form*. The content challenge is how we, the formerly marginalized ourselves, will create spaces large enough to bring in other marginalized voices—racial, sexual minorities and the gender minority—so that the new choir can sing a new song. When we try it, we often get cacophony. We definitely don't get four comforting parts that all know their intervals from each other. The challenge of the whole world now is whether



we can find a way to be truly diverse and yet give each person an equal opportunity for power and an equal vision for “real power”—spiritual power.

It is a very difficult assignment. Yet I come here today with hope. I have seen small miracles of true communication in the midst of great pain. I believe on our campus we are going to find a way to refocus a hate speech incident into a great story about peacemaking, Christian love, and respect for differences.

I leave you with this final challenge. What we need to do is impossible. And we should be glad. We’ve been given a huge task. If we can solve it, we will be salt and light in our society, and we will be a roaring fire again—as we were in the sixteenth century.

In Willa Cather’s novel *The Song of the Lark*, the main character, Thea Kronborg, an untutored girl from the Midwestern plains, struggles to find her own name as a musician and as a leader—an opera singer. Thea says these words, fitting for us today: “I want only the impossible things. The others don’t interest me.”

(3) *Paul Born*

*BE ideas inc., Cambridge, Ontario*

I would like to suggest a new paradigm for leadership in the Mennonite church. It is, I believe, consistent with Anabaptist teaching if not its practice. This new way is about collective leadership, about the priesthood of all believers. This new way holds up footwashing as a value greater than charismatic leadership. This new way develops common values over knowledge. This new way seeks to develop leaderful churches rather than great leaders for churches.

Traditional leadership has a hierarchy with rules made by people of position and followed by people who are made to respect position. Traditional leadership views people as human resources that have needs which, when met, will provide services as required. Leadership has been a term used to describe better ways in which to exercise control over these resources. Traditional leadership may well be exemplified in this statement by American General H. Norman Schwartzkopf: “To be an effective leader,

you have to have a manipulative streak—you have to figure out the people working for you and give each tasks that will take advantage of his strengths. That part of the job isn't fun, unless you're a real Machiavellian."

A leaderful church builds on the strengths of its members, placing great importance on community, and seeks to develop all the gifts of that community. A leaderful church seeks common vision based on clearly agreed-upon values. The leadership in this church is defined by its collective action rather than by the actions of its formal leadership structure. Being leaderful is not only an ideal practiced by the early church or our Anabaptist forebears. It is seen today in current management theory as the quality of a progressive organization with a strategic advantage over its competition.

A leaderful church has dynamic energy which is not controlled but rather focused on shared values and beliefs. It is a living system which creates dynamic action that is constant. Its strategic advantage is the people's collective will to be the best they can be in every situation. They do not need leaders to define their worth or their future; members define these for themselves based on common values and vision.

What would we see happening in a leaderful church? I suggest there are six things which would happen constantly in a leaderful situation. Doug Bowie, former vice-president of Petro Canada and past-president of the Niagara Institute, now at the University of Calgary, describes them as doing; organizing; contexting (seeing the current reality); symbolizing (modelling); purposing; exploring.

I think we can all understand the doing and organizing part, given that this is most of what we observe in churches today. These are skills which can be learned at most professional schools, including our seminaries.

But to build leaderful churches we must assist the membership to do and organize in the context of the current reality. We teach context by ensuring we are present in the current reality, rather than cloistered in our parochial schools and church communities or, even worse, judgmental of the current reality at the expense of distancing ourselves from it. If Mennonite young people are not trusted to be "in the world but not of the world," then we have mistrusted our ability to pass on our values.

In doing this we are also symbolizing or modelling our beliefs and values. The consistency between action and word is critical in a leaderful

church. We teach it by helping people to understand themselves and to embrace their strengths and weaknesses.

Leaderful churches are purposeful, bringing meaning to their doing and organizing, rather than seeking conformity to rules or tradition. We develop purposing by teaching critical thought and analysis, and by encouraging open and constant communication.

Leaderful churches are exploring as they grow in their desire to be more and better. This is the desire of all living organisms, including leaderful organizations.

A leaderful church is a living system, doing, organizing, contexting, symbolizing, purposing, and exploring.

A leaderful church would embrace servant leadership for all of its members. Such a church builds community and emphasizes the personal growth of its members. It embraces stewardship, awareness, persuasion, foresight, and conceptualization. It teaches listening, empathy, and healing.

My hope is that our discussion of power and authority can move beyond leadership development which is individualistic or institutional. And that this discussion would move toward collective or community leadership—the creation of a leaderful church.

## **The Church as Employer**

(1) *Stanley Green, President*

*Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana*

Four years ago when I came to Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM), I was awed by the legacy which we inherited. At the turn of the century, except for limited mission initiative in Indonesia led primarily from the Netherlands, Mennonites were essentially a North Atlantic people; almost without exception Mennonites were persons of European ancestry. One hundred years ago, in response to a famine, the first mission workers were sent by North American Mennonites to India. Soon others followed, going to Argentina, then Brazil, and ultimately to all six continents. From this worldwide web of witness to Jesus Christ the Mennonite peoplehood was profoundly transformed. Mennonite World Conference reported in 1997 that the center of gravity in the Mennonite movement has shifted south. There are now more Mennonites of color than otherwise.

What a remarkable legacy! But would it be continued in a new century? That's the question we were concerned about when I came to leadership at MBM. Previous generations, and in particular the World War II generation, were unquestioning and generous in their support and commitment to mission. The generation that followed, the baby boomers, for various reasons did not seem to share an equal enthusiasm for mission. Few people at MBM could remember when we had a year that hadn't experienced a decline in contributions. Our programs were shrinking. Rather than blame/shame the constituency, we chose to ask what we needed to do differently and we asked the church to help us. Through a process of listening and discernment called the Cana Venture, we heard many things from the church and, by the grace of God and the permission of our Board, we undertook a transformation of the organization.

For two years we were in the wilderness. The year we spent preparing for the transformation there was hope among some, cynicism among others, and resignation among yet others. In the year we designed a different organizational reality and began to fully implement the changes, there was

great anxiety and stress. Those were difficult days, wilderness times. We had left behind the familiar, but we weren't yet where we wanted to be. During those days our only currency was vision. To be a leader then required a lot of grace and much prayer. Eventually, however, desired change did come. Two years ago we still saw a decline in contributions but the gradient had moved toward a more level pitch. Then last year we received \$100,000 more than the previous year. At the mid-point of this year we had received \$300,000 more than a year ago and \$150,000 more than budget. In these last years I have known the perception of curse and blessing.

Wilderness experiences without secure walls and structures, full of dissent, turmoil, and a search for new meaning are a part of the current reality of life within organizations. The epoch when there was uniformity of assumptions about the world across the generations is long past. Each of us and each of our institutions function in the midst of fragmented, dissociated, competing, incongruent, narrowly focused fields of meaning and interest. As George Cabot Lodge wrote back in 1970 in the *Harvard Business Review*: "The ideological framework that related the timeless values of our civilization to the real world and guided the activities of our institutions has become palsied and obscure."<sup>1</sup>

In this context does the church look for road maps with which to chart its course through the turbulence and turmoil in the corporate world, or does it do something fundamentally different? Some believe that the peculiar nature of the church places it beyond correlation with other organizations in society. They argue that the supernatural, dynamic, and divine origin of the church leave it essentially without comparison among human institutions. By the same token and, perhaps to a larger degree, many businesspersons (and behavioral scientists) blithely claim that the problem with the church is that it has not adopted enough of the modern organizational practices of the corporate world. The first position claims that only categories conceived by the church make sense as tools for analysis. The second allows for no significant difference between the phenomena of a business organization and a churchly institution. In my opinion both views are wrong.

In my view the church is a human institution, a social reality whose forms and practices can be studied on the same terms as other social systems. At the same time there is a transcendent dynamic to churchly bodies which

creates unique realities. While the church and its institutions are grounded in the specificity of human time and event, the revelation of God through the church—the community of the Holy Spirit—invests it with a special meaning and purpose. It is perhaps that specialness of nature and purpose which creates extraordinary expectations. No matter how much each generation is reminded that the church (and its institutions) is made up of fallible, sinful human beings, the expectation persists that the church will deliver. Too often it doesn't. This results in a strange duality of perceptions about the church. Perfection is expected on the one hand. On the other, the workaday theology of many seems to be that the grace of God is powerful enough to renew individuals but that institutions are hopelessly demonic and sinful. This reality led Michael Novak to posit that the fundamental problem facing the church is to discover and decide “which choices of human polity for the structure of a community and for individual life contribute most, over the long run, to fidelity to the revelation of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Every organization has a set of values which shape the kinds of behavior sanctioned by the system; they influence the role expectations and pressures that prevail and help specify the nature of legitimate interaction by the organization with its environment. The church also has such a system, but the service it offers seeks to provide not only a universal value system but also people who demonstrate those values. “Practice what you preach” is a dictum widely applied across society. While most organizations are not inured from living by this dictum, none is forced to be as articulate and consistent with its ideology as often as the church. People reflexively look to churchly institutions for particular services. The nature of those services is unapologetically intangible. It is grounded in trust, self-acceptance, and identity. The church and its institutions are expected to teach and embody these values. The degree of congruence between what we say and do is crucial if people are to find truth voluntarily rather than from the blatant imposition of authority.

Amitai Etzioni characterizes institutions that rely on control through charisma, symbolic reward, esteem, acceptance, peer approval, or a high degree of personal identification with the leadership as “normative-power-oriented.”<sup>3</sup> The church is probably one of the most outstanding examples of an organization relying primarily on normative power. This presents a peculiar

challenge. First, charisma cannot be institutionalized. Personally attractive, life-filled, and life-giving people are not so easy to come by as are technically proficient, professionally trained replacements for the correct slot in the organization's chart. Second, the sources of power for the church are increasingly limited. Through much of the 1970s and '80s there seemed to be a growing trend to limit the areas in which the authority of institutions would be accepted. During this period in many Mennonite churchly institutions there appeared to be a devaluation of leadership. Leadership became risky business, and followership became more complex.

Reflecting on the nature of followership, Daniel Katz postulates three kinds of belonging to an organization—symbolic, normative, and instrumental.<sup>4</sup> *Symbolic attachment* refers to “emotionally held attitudes in which the symbols represent absolute values and have a life of their own.” *Normative involvement* is “the acceptance of specific legitimate requirements of the system necessary for system membership” (for the organization to work well I must live by its norms, i.e., approved ways of behaving). *Functional involvement* has to do with “commitment to the system because its demands are instrumental to his/her needs” (physical, material, and spiritual needs).

The trend toward membership based on functional and normative versus less symbolic involvement is a movement toward greater reliance on personal choice and away from the forces of tradition. Much of the traditional authority of the church has derived from the power of symbolic involvement. If Katz is correct—and from the MBM experience I believe he is, since we have transformed our organization and seen the mean age in it drop dramatically (in at least 8 job transitions we have replaced people whose average age was 63 with persons whose average age is 31)—symbolic involvement in our institutions is giving way to a commitment based directly on a functional interdependence. This interdependence says, “If I belong to your organization I will accept your standards of membership—the nature and degree of commitment desired—provided you can show me that they are necessary for the organization to be effective, and provided that membership gives me the rewards I am seeking.” The result of this trend simply reinforces the point that our institutions are laboring under a tremendous erosion of their traditional authority. All of our institutions are having to rely more and more

on controls/incentives based on a normative and functional perspective. This circumstance creates a significant challenge.

Before I address that challenge I want to recognize a related observation made by Thomas Bier, who describes three fundamental orientations toward organization:<sup>5</sup> 1) Formal—persons who assume formal lines of authority, accept direction without questioning; 2) Social—persons who enjoy discussion and agreement and work toward consensus and mutual goals; 3) Personal—You do your thing and I'll do mine, is the expectation. The prime value is on being oneself.

The person with a formal orientation is at home in the traditional bureaucratic organization with well-defined structure and tasks. Those with a social orientation are more comfortable with complex tasks whose shape continually changes as the result of interaction, collaboration, and consensus. An individual with a personal orientation may have difficulty functioning in any type of setting. In the last two decades environmental and social factors in the Mennonite church have entrenched the social orientation as the preferred organizational form. In that period, the church has shed many of its formal bureaucratic tendencies and has come to operate much more on the basis of mutualism, shared goals and tasks defined in collaboration. The personal orientation in many of our recent recruits is requiring a shift to a connective or coordinating style. Switchboarding—making connections so that people are helped to do their thing (and if by chance it is congruent with someone else's thing, so much the better)—is the direction in which our organizations are being pushed.

When you have churchly institutions composed of persons with all three kinds of orientation, it creates the inevitability of significant conflict, internally and externally. Many of the tasks of churchly organizations require collaboration with highly diverse interest groups. This reality creates an institutional dilemma—that of maintaining a trustworthy contract with a wide range of persons. The authority of the institution can no longer assure compliance, much less commitment. Commitment more and more involves cooperative endeavor based on congruence between individual interest and organizational goals. The loss of power to ensure compliance results in organizations having to deal with conflicts of interest—varieties of psychological contracts—in the hope of securing commitment. This requires



that leadership must understand the psychology of power and politics in situations pregnant with conflicting interest.

Conflict is a particularly challenging issue in Mennonite institutions because cultural forces embedded there militate against the recognition and constructive use of differences. Even though we probably have some of the more highly skilled and trained conflict entrepreneurs in the Mennonite church, for many the word “conflict” is not to be used in churchly settings. There is a widespread implicit agreement that no matter how you feel individually, debate, disagreement, political posturing, or the voicing of opposing views has no place in church, particularly if it might arouse ire or emotion. Even if persons as individuals learn that it is important to learn creative ways of expressing, understanding, and utilizing differences, a cultural veneer still remains that says, “No, no, not here!” The curious situation then arises in which the existence of a norm suppressing conflict in itself generates conflict, and leads to the struggle to find a positive strategy that can deal with conflict avoidance, the submergence of differences, and the repression of dissent which fosters dysfunction and ill-health in the life of the organization. Part of the curse is that we have no easy way of dealing with conflict.

Our institutions are an expression of our need to universalize our best hopes and wishes for our world. But we need to remind ourselves of the fallacy of confusing the wish with reality. The church should be the first place where this fallacy is recognized—the last place to confuse the hope of the Kingdom/Reign of God with the actual life and work of the institution. No institution can ever perfectly embody humanity’s best hopes and dreams. However, we can learn to embody commitment to a continuous search for deeper wisdom, a fuller understanding, and the hope of healing flowing through us and then into the world.

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## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> George Cabot Lodge, “Top Priority: Renovating Our Ideology,” *Harvard Business Review* (September-October 1970): 40.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Novak, “The Meaning of Church in Anabaptism and Roman Catholicism Past and Present,” in *Voluntary Association*, ed. D.B. Robertson (Richmond, VA.: John Knox Press,

1966), 91.

<sup>3</sup> Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice- Hall, 1964), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Katz, "Group Process and Social Integration," *Journal of Social Issues* (January 1967): 18.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas E. Bier, "Contemporary Youth: Implications of the Personalistic Life Style for Organizations," Ph.D diss. (Case Western Reserve University, 1967).

(2) *Rudy Siemens, Administrator*

*Tabor Manor, St. Catharines, Ontario*

Power and authority should not be self-proclaimed but mandated by God and the community within which we work. Without recognition of authority within our constituency, the claim to have authority from God may well be a deception.

My framework for this topic comes from within the "secular" arm of the church, that is, institutions owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference. In this wider context I have worked for fourteen years with the mentally ill and disabled, and eight years with seniors.

Let me begin with Bethesda Home, a mental health facility, which was founded by a farm couple, Henry and Maria Wiebe. The authority and power to operate lay with them at first. As the project grew, the Mennonite Brethren Conference took an interest, and eventually the operation became Canada-wide. Power and authority went through marked stages. Initially services were provided to mentally ill residents at no cost to the taxpayer. Eventually the cost became burdensome and now the operation is covered totally through tax dollars.

I have observed that the relationship between the church and the state in this power sharing creates some problems. Before the state entered, the church was, and needed to be, totally involved. Without it the work would fail. The church had a stake in the project. There was much voluntarism, visitation and interest in special events. With total government funding, the scenario changed quickly to polite interest, reduction in voluntarism and eventually to very low interest. Power and authority had been transferred from the church to the state. The mission statement is still church-driven and a church-elected board still oversees the project, but fewer staff have church

affiliation and the decision making is quite remote from the church. This is not to criticize the churches or the board of directors. Yet the power and authority in such projects (and Bethesda is not alone) has largely been relinquished by the church.

My present position as administrator of two facilities for seniors gives me another perspective on the power and authority of the church in this mission. Both facilities are relatively modern, and the power structure in their operation is more tax-base-oriented than church. The body which controls the funds generally has the authority. However, we live in a political environment which is probably unique: while our homes must meet rigid standards, considerable authority is left to the churches which run them.

I see no government interference with the mission statement which is biblically based and specifically oriented to “the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Since more than half our funding comes from the Ontario Ministry of Health, the power and authority to run the Home obviously needs to be a negotiated model. We meet standards outlined by the Ministry, but day-to-day operation is carried out by staff hired by an elected church board. Some years ago we lobbied the Ontario government to allow us to give preferred admission to those of our ethnic and religious persuasion. The government was quite willing to negotiate its power and authority in this area.

How is working for a church-owned operation funded by the government different from, say, working at a municipal or privately-owned Home?

1. We live in a fish bowl. That keeps us accountable and gives us support. But it also leaves us open to detailed scrutiny by our 4,000 plus owners who can come in from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m..

2. We have a unique staffing flavor which is very obvious to most people who work and live here. The flavor is ethnically Mennonite but also Christian. We dare not rest on this, but it is a major strength.

3. Staff/management relationships are different, usually better. Presently our Homes are not unionized. A staff association acts on behalf of staff and keeps communication and awareness alive. We have, I believe, better morale and a better staff commitment than in non-church Homes, as testified by new staff, families, and the Ministry. This does not mean things are always smooth and everyone is happy. It does mean our staff have a

commitment to the mission given us by the church and greater empathy with our residents.

4. Handling difficult staffing issues is more humane—at least that is our goal and intent. Often in a church setting, disciplining or correcting staff is not handled well because we are afraid to offend fellow believers. Here I have learned much from the secular model of dealing with people. A blend of Christian beliefs and acquired skills seems to work well in receiving, delegating, and sharing power and authority.

5. Our board is small but decisive, tenacious, and supportive. There is long-term vision and regular contact with administration. We have a good balance in power and authority. Because board members are volunteers and cannot devote as much time to the work as staff, directions need to be fleshed out by staff. No major decisions in direction, capital purchase, and even in hiring supervisory staff are made without board involvement at some level. Because our board is small, it does not work through committees.

I feel empowered by my board and our constituency, and my continuous plan is to empower and support our staff. Power and authority in their various forms need to be directed totally to serve residents better and not to further personal agendas.

(3) *Sue C. Steiner, Pastor*

*Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ontario*

I grew up during the fading days of the bishop era in the Franconia Conference (Pennsylvania) of the Mennonite Church. My first minister was my Dad's Uncle Jake. Recently it occurred to me that this discussion—on the congregation as employer—would have been incomprehensible to Uncle Jake. For, you see, Moyer & Son was Uncle Jake's employer. Or, to be more accurate, he employed others at the family feed mill he owned with my grandfather. Uncle Jake got love offerings from his congregation, but his livelihood came from bookkeeping and managing at Moyer & Son.

This discussion would have been incomprehensible to Uncle Jake for another reason. Souderton Mennonite Church didn't appoint a search committee of lay persons to sift through a stack of resumes, then present Jake

to preach a trial sermon, after which he would be approved for a three-year term as minister following a secret ballot by the congregation. Nor did they appoint a review committee after three years to decide whether Uncle Jake's ministry style and emphases were still compatible with the needs of the congregation. Rather, Jacob M. Moyer was ordained by lot. That is, the Franconia Conference bishops discerned that the Souderton congregation needed a pastor. They invited the membership at Souderton to put forth the names of godly men from within the congregation who could serve in this way. Then, in a public meeting at the church, each of these men chose a hymnbook with a slip of paper hidden in it. The slips of paper in the other hymnbooks were blank. But in Uncle Jake's book the slip of paper said: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33).

By this means, Uncle Jake became a pastor at the Souderton Mennonite Church in 1913 at the age of twenty-three. His authority came from God and his appointment was for life. The only way out was to get sick or die. In his book, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, John Ruth describes Jacob M. Moyer as a sometimes severe shepherd, ready to work obediently within the old authority structures. When told by the church's deacon to comb his hair down over his forehead, he did so. When asked by the bishops to enforce dress standards, he did so. When asked to review teaching materials for doctrinal purity, he did so.<sup>1</sup> But by the late 1950s, Uncle Jake was in big trouble. The whole authority structure by which he had lived his life came crashing down around him as lay leaders wanted to take charge in matters previously reserved for ministers. The last straw was when the Sunday school superintendents began leading teacher training sessions in the church. Uncle Jake got sick, and soon his generation passed away.

Gradually, authority became vested in congregations. And ministers became—among other things—employees. I remember certain churches I visited in the 1960s and '70s, the ones in full revolt against the authoritarian era. There was lots of talk about "the priesthood of all believers." This seemed to mean that everybody was supposed to pitch in and do the work, and to develop and use their gifts to the full. But no one—either lay or ordained—was allowed to lead, since no one was given authority apart from the group. I saw pastors who were hired to be coordinators go through intricate dances

with their congregations in order to claim some authority without seeming to do so.

As I look back, I am sad both for the Uncle Jakes of the late bishop era and for the hired coordinators of the era which immediately followed. I read both kinds of experiences as cautionary tales. I don't want to spend my time choreographing elaborate dances with the congregations I serve in order to claim some authority without seeming to. But as I claim authority as a pastoral leader, I want to hold it lightly. I don't want to lapse into a kind of control from which sickness or death is the only escape. Sometimes I wonder what they'll say about our era fifty years hence, after the old givers die off and congregations lose their tax-exempt status and everything changes. Will they wonder how we could have been taken in by the spirit of the age and professionalized spiritual leadership? Will they shake their heads at us and wonder how we could have possibly imagined that employees of congregations could also lead those congregations?

In my part of the Mennonite world, pastors *are*—among other things—more or less professionalized employees. That is a given. I have been an employee of four congregations as either a pastor or interim pastor. With each, I have had a memo of understanding—which would have appalled my great uncle Jake—detailing such things as salary and benefits and supervision and reviews and sabbaticals, following the guidelines supplied by our denomination almost to the letter. As a pastor, I clearly am an employee.

Yet I refuse to define myself by that part of my reality. I work in a part of the church which remembers both the Uncle Jakes and the hired coordinators. What has worked fairly well for me is to define myself as one who shares in leadership authority with other ministers and lay leaders within whichever congregation I serve, and as one who tries to model a way of leading which invites others in. The authority in which I share comes first of all from Jesus Christ, who gives the church as a whole the right and the power to act in his name. Power and authority resides first in God, then in the church, then—on a seconded basis—in individuals for the benefit of the group. Celia Hahn, who is one of my heroes, puts it like this: “I give my religious leader authority, so I can receive it back again with power. Authority belongs to everybody, and the function of leadership is the empowerment of all.”<sup>2</sup>

I believe that when ministers and lay leaders can model shared authority in ways that empower congregations, we are making a major contribution that takes us beyond both Uncle Jake and hired coordinators. The first step is to lose our fear of the word “power” so that we can exercise it appropriately—neither giving it away out of fear nor abusing it for our own ends. I still run into many church situations in which power is seen to be so negative that we can’t acknowledge we have any, either as pastors or as lay leaders. The most challenging lay leader I’ve ever encountered was the church chair in a congregation where I served briefly as a consultant. I quickly found that in this congregation one couldn’t use the word “power” or the word “authority.” In fact, one could hardly even use the word “leadership.” Repeatedly what happened was that individuals rose up and attempted to exercise control, only to be batted down by the group. Then I met the church chair. He was a likeable man, a successful business owner, always on the cutting edge, very astute, very aggressive, and a risk taker. He appeared to be quite comfortable with the way he functioned as a business person. The problem was that when he pulled into the church lot, he became an entirely different person. He believed that in the church setting, power was bad—a word that should not even be mentioned—so as a consequence he imagined that his role as church chair was to refuse to exercise any leadership. In fact, he became downright passive while all sorts of power plays continued to erupt all around him. From my vantage point, his refusal to lead contributed to the culture of havoc in that congregation.

At this point I need to give my definition of power: the ability to act and have influence based on the resources, position, and trust we have been given. The way I can survive as an employee and lead appropriately is to recognize the power I have as a pastor and name it, to invite other leaders to recognize the power they have and name it, and then to model how we can empower others and work together for common ends. Power can be used to empower others or for our own ends. The role of leadership is to help the congregation see the power it has together as the body of Christ in this particular place.

I need to be very alert to the power I do have, and I need to use it very carefully. For instance, in one congregation that I served, I had power simply because I was a middle-class person rather than one who lived in poverty. In another, I had power because I had more education than most members of the

congregation. As a pastor I always have power because I'm at the centre of the information flow of the congregation and in a position to see the whole picture, because I'm given permission to enter the sacred spaces of people's lives in ordinary times but also in times of high vulnerability, and because I'm privy to all sorts of confidential information. I carry significant power and authority in matters of spiritual direction, pastoral care, and preaching (simply because I have more air time than anyone else). This can be used to empower and guide members in their spiritual journeys and help set a direction for the congregation. Or it can be used to control, dominate, and diminish.

To be a faithful leader, I also need to be very alert to the kinds of power I don't have. I don't have the power to coerce others to do as I wish—or even to see the situation as I do. I don't have the power to force dying persons out of denial, or the power to get persons in self-destructive spirals to stop. Furthermore, to be a faithful leader I need to be alert to the times I'm tempted to give up power. If, for instance, I'm in a position to see the whole, I may be unfaithful if I keep quiet about what I see.

“Servant leaders,” says Celia Hahn, “are neither controlling nor passive, but active, responsible . . . working collaboratively with their fellow servants to do what's needed.”<sup>3</sup> These understandings, I believe, enable me to lead in a congregation where I am also an employee.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John L. Ruth, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship* (Herald Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Celia Allison Hahn, *Growing in Authority, Relinquishing Control* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



## **Power in Business and Church**

(1) *Lynn Roy*

*World Access, Waterloo, Ontario*

With a last name like Roy, and not Shantz or Martin or Thiessen, it quickly becomes apparent that I am an import to the Mennonite faith. I chose to become part of Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church ten years ago. When asked to participate in this discussion, I was excited and then humbled to have an opportunity to explore a concept which has become so important in my life—that is, how power in business can be used as outreach.

Three years ago I strongly considered leaving my position as chief operating officer of a multi-million dollar company for something more “spiritual.” I considered many opportunities that would perhaps be deemed by others and by me to be more “worthy.” But then it occurred to me that perhaps my workplace, where people spend 50 percent of their waking hours, could be my own mission location. I was excited by the fact that I had access to 150 individuals, mostly non-Christian, to whom I could introduce the qualities of Christ on a daily basis. Now, I am not Jimmy Swaggart or a big-toothed evangelist but what I work to be, and what close Christian colleagues work to ensure that I am, is a servant leader. By this I mean someone who attempts to exhibit qualities that Christ would be proud of and who encourages and develops those qualities in the management team that surrounds me.

Having the power of running a corporate entity involves the privilege of selecting speakers for the company’s quarterly meetings. We often invite a pastor from Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church or a Christian professor from Wilfrid Laurier University to give a 20-minute presentation on a relevant business topic, such as team building, conflict resolution, etc. We would all recognize this as a sermon, but it is done in a secular manner so that no one suspects that we are really evangelizing. This may sound manipulative, but I don’t believe it is, as those biblical principles are awesome in a workplace, especially when placed in secular vernacular when at all possible. The best part is when the speaker leaves and non-Christian individuals approach me and say, “That was really great . . . Who was that

speaker?” When I can reply, “Oh, that was the pastor from my church,” it is an incredibly powerful way of attracting seekers to the church. There are still many people who think that church has to be boring and irrelevant to their daily lives, and this is an amazing opportunity to show them another side.

I think what my power in my workplace allows me to do is combine my two loves—Jesus Christ and people—to a greater cause. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission have become the vision of the church I attend, and that is “To Make More and Better Disciples.” To that end, I attest that the *concept of using power in the workplace as an outreach* fulfills both of those objectives. In the workplace Christians have a secular audience watching them everyday in their business dealings. By following the example of Christ, we can be part of his marketing plan to make more disciples. To the extent that we as “power-owners” can exemplify servant leadership, we will ultimately and necessarily become better disciples.

(2) *Milo Shantz, President*  
*Mercedes Corp., St. Jacobs, Ontario*

Responding to the question [put to participants in this panel], “How do my faith, my values and my ethical standards affect the decisions I make in my business activities,” I like to think that I make my decisions on the basis of all three. Early in life my parents demonstrated Christian values by the way they lived, and what I learned in my church community made for sound business practice. I learned that being a Christian involves honesty, frankness, community, fairness, and listening. These qualities empowered me to do business.

“What can the church and business say to each other, or do they operate in different worlds?” I believe they operate in different worlds, but I can name five persons who early in my life became mentors [on this issue] and I am working at naming others. Orie Miller is one of them.

Orie Miller, a business person and churchman, was one of those who on my first trip to South America thirty years ago assured me as a young entrepreneur that it was okay to be in business. He shared his principles regarding charity and the management of wealth. As a powerful church leader involved in many church institutions, he provided stimulation and

encouragement to younger people to become involved in the forerunners of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA). These organizations provided forums for interaction between church and business, and for some business people MEDA became church. Presently, the local chapter of MEDA has involved many members who meet regularly to share their life stories and experiences in business.

The church is made up of people who work at a variety of jobs, but it appears that the business person is often singled out (because of leadership? wealth? taking risks? creating change?) as a “bad” person. My own community (St. Jacobs) was designated by the Region of Waterloo and the Province of Ontario as a tourist destination and the core area for expansion is clearly defined. When my corporation was proposing a 30-room inn and a minor variance was required, none of us in the corporation was aware of any objections and no one in the village had spoken to us about concerns. Yet at the local council meeting several dozen people showed up to object to our proposals, including members of my own congregation. We have also experienced small groups calling the media, stating inaccuracies and outright falsehoods.

These are the forms of power we encounter, along with community gossip and false assumptions: 1) In 1987 I was working in my overalls in St. Jacobs and overheard visitors at a restaurant naming me and being complimentary about their experience, but going on to say that I was in trouble with the local Mennonite church and was forced to start my own congregation in Waterloo; 2) The inn next door to the church, of which my family is one of 20 equal shareholders, is often referred to as “my” inn; 3) The controversial tourist train which travels from Waterloo to St. Jacobs, of which I am not a shareholder, is often called “Milo’s train.”

The issues I have faced are not unique to me. Other entrepreneurs have faced similar pains. What is also common to our shared experiences is that in many cases we have not felt support from our church community. In fact, often we have felt just the opposite: we have felt condemnation. Somehow we need to find a way whereby we can encourage dialogue rather than confrontation. We need to encourage forums where disagreements and misunderstandings can be brought to the forefront, so that in the light of a sincere desire to understand one another we can have a meaningful

conversation. Maybe some of this could start in Sunday school classes or in small group settings where we all tell our stories. By starting this way, maybe we can get to know each other as individuals and eventually start supporting one another.

(3) *Joyce Bontrager Lehman, Chartered Public Accountant  
Lehman & Wilkinson, Keene, New Hampshire*

Do business and the church operate in different worlds? Yes, is the easy and perhaps the obvious answer, but for those who are in business and work every day, it does not help connect Sunday to Monday. Such a split is too dramatic, too intense to maintain, and one side or the other eventually gives way. We must find ways to communicate, to learn from each other, to listen, and to nurture.

I noticed a church marquee with the words: “If you want to get work done, every committee should have three people, two of whom are absent!” In decision-making, there are perceived differences: the autocratic top-down corporate model versus the idealistic consensus model. I am not sure these differences are real. Many businesses are learning that a flatter management structure is often more effective. And there are too many churches, in my opinion, moving to the other end of the spectrum, dictating rather than talking. Perhaps the two could meet in the middle and help each other to stay there.

What about accountability and vision? Businesses need to justify their existence every single day with a clear vision of meeting the needs of their customers. What about the greater church, the conference, the congregation? To whom is it accountable? Who are the customers? What is the purpose? Is it effective, useful? How is that measured? Are all resources well utilized? Some would say these questions are not appropriate for a congregation. I believe they are. But I also know that the answers, if any, are not easy, cannot be uniform, and must be dynamic.

Another sign on a church marquee (these were both churches within the Anabaptist family): “God calls us to be faithful, not successful.” I was distressed and saddened. Why the conflict? What is the message? Whatever

the intent, I know the message further marginalized members of that congregation who already felt like second-class citizens. We need to be careful with our words. Money, power, success, profit, and “bottom-line orientation” are often used in ways that have negative connotations. We need to exorcise those habits and neutralize the judgment inherent in those words. Profit is not greed. It is an excess of revenue over expenses, a necessity for the existence of any organization. Other words are euphemisms. “Stewardship” is used to mean “giving money away” rather than “making the most of all God-given talents and gifts.” The latter is a challenge for young and old, rich and poor, and the real task of the “stewardship committee.” The other is simply fundraising and should be so named.

Business people, or others, do not have to choose between success and faithfulness. And the church is the place to start, with careful conversation, empathy, and perhaps even understanding. Instead of creating a barrier, the church can embrace the gifts and resources of all its members.

## Personal Stories of Decisions and Dilemmas

(1) *Carl Zehr*

*Mayor of Kitchener, Ontario*

When I was asked to discuss power and authority, I was reminded of Star Trek, the X-Generation. Starship Enterprise is under attack. The captain calls down to the engine room, “Quick, I need more power.” There’s a moment of silence. Then the response comes back from the newest crew member: “But sir, you’re already the captain. Isn’t that power enough?” Before, I was dealing with power and authority intuitively and instinctively. This consultation has allowed me to think about what I am doing, how I’m doing it, and why I’m doing it.

For the most part, previous generations of Mennonites in North America rarely participated in the world of politics. In some circles, voting was frowned upon and running for public office was not even considered. Today it is not uncommon to find men and women of our faith tradition deeply involved in the political process. We may even find ourselves confronting each other on opposite sides of issues. This is healthy. We are not a monolithic community. Indeed, sometimes we appear to be as diverse as the broader world in which we live. Because of this, we have the opportunity to demonstrate our tradition of tolerance of differing views, remaining steadfast in our beliefs yet respectfully debating issues.

The Mennonite church does not have a history of exercising power and authority through a traditional hierarchy. Rather, it has tended to function in a more collegial manner, with power and authority being maintained by the people (members). We do have leaders, but within our tradition leadership tends to be a reflection of the will of the people rather than an abdication of will to the leader.

In my public life I have naturally, perhaps subconsciously, fallen into that same mold. It may seem odd in some circles to say that I am a reflection of the will of the people, but surely that is one of the key ingredients of a well-functioning democracy. While my personality is a basic determinant of how I function in public, I am convinced that my heritage and church environment

have kept me from abusing the power and authority granted to me by the citizens of Kitchener.

What power and authority does a mayor have? The current Ontario Municipal Act states that the head of council has a duty to: be vigilant and active in causing the laws of the city to be duly executed and obeyed; oversee the conduct of all subordinate officers in the government; and communicate to council such information and recommend to it such measures as may tend to the improvement of the finances, health, security, cleanliness, comfort, and ornament of the city.

I see a distinction between “power” and “authority.” While the Municipal Act confers certain authority on the mayor, much more important is the power of the role. In many ways, the power of the mayor goes far beyond the legal authority. My position gives me the opportunity to lead—or not—on many issues. And not just on those that are strictly within municipal jurisdiction. Because I am the mayor of Kitchener (for the time being), I have easier access to the media and to business, government and community leaders. I am aware that with both power and authority goes responsibility, legal and moral. That is why it is important to earn the respect of the people I represent, my colleagues on council, and the people who administer the day-to-day affairs of the city and region. While I am not uncomfortable with the power and authority given to me, I have tried to also treat them with respect. And that leads me to describe some of the decisions I must make. Sometimes they are moral or ethical decisions that test my values and beliefs, while others are simpler and require just good common sense and fairness.

One recent issue related to pornographic theaters. In the summer of 1998 my office received a call from a person who had knowledge that a theater which had applied for a building permit in the downtown was likely to show porno movies. Does one impose one’s own moral standard on this request, or does one have the obligation to reflect a reasonably accepted public standard? Council and I chose the latter. A side incident arose when a columnist for the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* contacted me for more details. Initially, in attempting to protect the identity of the caller, I said that the call had been anonymous when it had not. It didn’t take me long to realize my statement could easily be proven incorrect. Accordingly, I called the columnist to explain why I would not release the name, an explanation which

he accepted. Now, this seems quite innocuous; however, it solidified in my mind that full disclosure (as much as is legally possible) is paramount in order not to abuse the power of information.

An area of decision making regularly placed before me and my council is that of judging development proposals. Inevitably, most proposals are met with widely divergent opinions as to whether or not they will add to the quality of life in our community. Evaluating these proposals is as much related to the vision one has of our community as it is a process of power. Is one swayed by the professional, sometimes slick presentations of the proponents or by the sometimes emotional arguments of neighbors or opponents? While King Solomon had both power and authority, I imagine he used his wisdom in a way that I can only dream about.

That wisdom is needed to rise above acquiescing to special interest groups, friends, or acquaintances and to respectfully use power and responsibility to make a fair decision. One way of describing this delicate balance is to think of power and authority as one side of a coin while responsibility and sensitivity are the other side. In a democratic society, elected people, no matter what their political stripe, are not elected to act irresponsibly.

An example of power which translates into “political influence” is the renewed focus on nuclear weapons. I recently participated in a roundtable discussion on the abolition of these weapons. The consultation, sponsored by Project Ploughshares, was held to discover and plan ways to raise the level of consciousness of the overwhelming and disastrous effects of a nuclear war or accident. While this issue does not come under the jurisdiction of a local municipality, it could have a very direct impact on the lives and life style of the inhabitants of our community. So the question is, How can I use the power vested in my position to influence my council colleagues, both city and regional, and my community to urgently and seriously address this issue?

Another issue where power *and* authority could have translated into a tool of influence is the Ralgreen Crescent issue. Several residents of this street in Kitchener brought a complaint that their homes were built over a landfill which had now allegedly caused both structural damage to their houses and illnesses in their families. When I took office, I hoped I could use my influence as mayor to bring closure to the matter by squarely facing the



issue with the residents. I believed I was making progress until I received an early Christmas present of a \$65 million lawsuit. Unfortunately, I now must say ‘no comment’ on this issue as a result of the legal direction the matter has taken. I cite this example to highlight the fact that even power and authority vested in certain positions can be thwarted by external circumstances. My influence now is limited to encouraging an expeditious, fair insurance and legal process to this matter.

I stated earlier that leadership within our Mennonite tradition tends to be a reflection of the will of the people. I must remember that I have a responsibility as a leader not only to lead by example, from my own background and beliefs, but also to sift through the diverse opinions of the people and the many cultural and ethnic traditions and opinions of those I represent.

Effective power and authority comes from a relationship of trust and respect that must be earned by the person in the leadership role. It is not possible to act in a domineering manner if long-term goals and objectives are to be met. Yes, in cases where urgent decisions are needed, it is necessary to use one’s authority to act quickly. But much more can be accomplished in the long run if one moves confidently to build trusting and respectful relationships.

(2) *Jan Steckley, Pastor*

*Hillcrest Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ontario*

It was a sobering moment when I discovered my name in one of the lead stories in the local newspaper. The previous evening, I had brought opening words for the final rehearsal in preparation for the Mennonite Mass Choir presentation of Handel’s *Messiah* at the Centre in the Square in Kitchener. This was no ordinary rehearsal, as the members of the Mass Choir had just a few days before been informed by the executive committee of the Menno Singers (the sponsoring body of the Choir) that a decision had been made to terminate the services of their conductor. That announcement had touched down on the group like a small tornado, leaving unanswered questions and intense emotions scattered about in its wake. Battle lines were quickly drawn,

threatening to undermine the cohesion of the choir and the delivery of the performances. By the time I became involved, formal mediation had already taken place and a mutually agreed resolution reached which would see the conductor's termination take effect after the *Messiah* performances.

Some concern remained over what might happen when the entire group met again, and so the decision was taken to invite someone outside the situation to open the rehearsal. The invitation was extended to me and I accepted. Over the next two days, my ideas began to take shape as to how I might assist this group in acknowledging the emotions which had been generated but also in placing the events and the upcoming performances in a faith context.

Using the biblical passage "For everything there is a time and a season . . ." (Eccl. 3), I invited participants to see the events of the past week as one of life's many seasons, one which had brought many intense emotions and unanswered questions but still one in which God was and continued to be present. I encouraged them to hear both the message of Immanuel—"God with us"—inherent in the words and music they would be singing and the promise of a Messiah who had the power to bring healing in the midst of pain, hope in despair, peace in conflict, and light in darkness. As a concrete symbol, I lit a candle on stage which would burn for the final rehearsal and be lit again each night for the performances as a visible reminder of God's presence made known through Jesus. I concluded with a prayer of blessing.

As I pondered and carefully prepared the words I would bring, I gave no thought to the possibility that a reporter would be covering this event, which had now become a major local news item. Although I had asked some questions of the Menno Singers' executive to clarify my role before accepting the invitation, I still struggled with exactly what it ought to be. On whose authority would I be speaking? What, if anything, would give my words a sense of integrity and power for this group of people, most of whom I had never met personally? How would I use this role in a helpful and life-giving way?

Not until I read an account of the evening as seen through the eyes of a reporter did the full import of my role truly hit me. Statements such as "An expectant silence fell over nearly 400 singers and symphony musicians as Jan Steckley mounted the conductor's podium. She was there to begin

Wednesday evening's *Messiah* dress rehearsal at Centre in the Square, but instead of a baton and score, she carried a Bible," and "Steckley pleaded for a show of unity . . . 'Together you have the potential to give a powerful gift,' she said" gave me a new appreciation for the authority someone else perceived as inherent in my role as pastor.

While the role of pastor is at many levels a public one, most of the contexts in which I work are not so broadly public as was my participation in these events. Nonetheless, I am increasingly aware of the many ways and situations in which I am regularly invested with power and authority by groups and individuals in both personal and corporate settings because I am a pastor. As I face specific decisions and/or dilemmas in my ministry, several questions related to power and authority have become helpful for me to consider:

1) *What is the nature of the power and authority I hold in this particular situation/setting?* Ten plus years of pastoral ministry have taught me that I *am* entrusted with power and authority by virtue of my office. I continue to work at being comfortable in claiming what is a part of the office, believing that by God's grace, I can exercise it in faithful and responsible ways. While I initially was not fully aware of the potential impact of my role, I agreed to bring opening words for the Mass Choir rehearsal because at some level I believed that my office of pastor carried power and authority, giving me an opportunity to open the door for God's healing and hope.

2) *How will I exercise this power and authority?* Once I am aware of my power and authority in a given setting, I can make the exercise of it a conscious choice. For me, this is primarily a theological issue. As a pastor, my power and authority must be exercised in ways which point others to God—in ways that invite them to see God's activity in their lives and in the world. I cannot do that without knowing and being able to articulate my own understanding of how God is at work in my life.

3) *What will be the impact on others?* I think about power and authority in collaborative rather than hierarchical terms and therefore choose a "power with" rather than a "power over" position. The result of my exercising it will be that others gain power rather than lose it. This is one place where I am aware of the influence of gender on my interactions with those whom I have

been called to serve. As the primary nurturers in our society, women are accustomed to using what power they have for the benefit of others. Women have been socialized to collaborate and cooperate because our societal roles have required that we work with others, not against them.

Even though I had no direct involvement in the Mass Choir crisis, I could utilize my role as pastor to “come alongside” a group of people, sharing in their pain and confusion, invoking a higher power on their behalf in order to claim healing and hope for myself and for them. I trust the space was created in which those present were able to claim that healing and transforming power for themselves, to recognize God’s presence with and in them.

(3) *J. Lawrence Burkholder, Professor Emeritus and Past President  
Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana*

In 1945 I assumed certain post-World War II responsibilities for the administration of relief services in China under the auspices of Church World Service and the United Nations. This was the occasion for me to observe for the first time fundamental differences between a personal ethic appropriate to simple one-to-one situations and a social institutional ethic appropriate to complex organizations of structured power. In many respects, I was a typical Mennonite, a young conscientious objector, a fledgling pastor committed to a radical sectarian ethic of nonresistant love based upon the perfectionist teachings of Jesus.

At that time, China was attempting to recover from the Japanese occupation. A vast refugee population and numerous institutions that had migrated to West China during the war were returning to coastal provinces and cities. I became involved in a process of national reconstruction, intensified by civil war between the Nationalists and Communists. As an individual I had the satisfaction of feeding and clothing the poor, and as a pilot I took special satisfaction in flying with General Chennault’s Flying Tigers as a co-pilot in the transport of refugees and relief supplies. This was dangerous work, but in retrospect the most rewarding of my life.

To be sure, there were frustrations, but they were not ethical in nature. Most had to do with contingencies arising from the chaos of the times. Relief

supplies were inadequate, some Chinese officials were corrupt, trains were interrupted by civil war, inflation was rampant, rivers were flooded, and the engines of our planes were unreliable. Every day was an adventure.

But my spirit flourished as I sought to compensate for adversity by hard work, honest relationships, sacrifice, and those virtues of imaginative love with which we associate the tradition of discipleship. As long as I was free as an individual to sacrifice my own well-being for the good of others, my conscience was reasonably clear. In simple one-to-one situations, I became vulnerable. I tried to go the second mile and return good for evil. I worked overtime, and my family and I lived, though separated by war, on a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) allowance.

This is to make no claim for moral heroics, but to indicate that in so far as I failed to be ethical, the problem was theoretically a problem of will, not the shape of the ethical situation. That is, I did not feel it necessary to do evil. Moral conflict could be resolved by “accepting the cross,” so I assumed. After all, it would be only my life that would be sacrificed, were I to lose my life. Of course, it was never quite that simple, since I was married and had a family.

But the ethical situation in which I found myself changed fundamentally as I was appointed national director of Church World Service and later head of a commission for the United Nations. My duties as an executive required me to relate responsibly, in behalf of the organizations I represented, to many different individuals and institutions such as my staff, boards, banks, customs, labor unions, shipping companies, churches, government offices, and Communist authorities. Many of these agencies were in competition with each other, and normal complexities were aggravated by the civil war. As a young man, I had never previously contemplated either the “infinite” possibilities for good and/or the necessity of compromise that the administration of corporate power may entail. I found myself quite unprepared for the competitive, dog-eat-dog nature of what some would have accepted as the inevitable institutional diagonals of power. The responsibility of balancing rights, meeting conflicting obligations, and choosing between pragmatic exigencies and moral principles was not amenable, I found, to the teachings on forgiving love and sacrifice in the Sermon on the Mount. Certainly, personal integrity and a measure of magnanimity were significant components of any ethical situation. But I had to draw on resources that were in short supply in my background, namely a rational sense of legal

justice, willingness to assert institutional power, willingness to take legal recourse, and courage to make hard political choices. I had to learn to stand up against inordinate demands of competing parties and to make preferential judgements. Sometimes I had to disappoint, even hurt, some in order to help others. In other words, I had to make an ethical place for the just use of power in ambiguous situations. Nonresistance, however fundamental to our faith, was not enough.

No institution that I worked for was prepared to accept its own demise. Institutional policies, pragmatic criteria for success, legal considerations, government regulations, political realities, and competing powers demanded decisions based upon necessity as well as morality. My naive ideal assumption that conflicts must be resolved by nonresisting love alone, as in person-to-person relations, was challenged. After all, commercial and political organizations are instruments of power regulated, to be sure, by law and principles of civility and fairness, but hardly by the uncompromising ideals of sacrificial, let alone mutual, love.

Under such circumstances, what could I do but the best possible? And this I did upon the distance between the ideal and the real, trying to account for the difference. Of course, an obvious reason why organizations do not embody the ideal is sin. I came from China a believer in “original sin,” albeit not clearly defined. But I was convinced that there were other reasons having to do with power and complexity. The organizations I administered were complex in that they represented many different internal interests—some of them legal. Furthermore, the business of simply giving things away in large numbers involved the multi-lateral claims of different starving cities, hundreds of hospitalized patients, and thousands of homeless refugees. So I signed orders as a consequence of which, unfortunately, some would live and others would likely die.

To be sure, such issues were exaggerated by the chaos of civil war, but I was intrigued then, as I am to this day, about whether compromise is rooted willfully in sin or by necessity in structure, or in both, compounded by their interaction. As Mennonites continue to penetrate the world of business, politics, and institutional development, they would do well to ponder the perennial issue of moral freedom and “tragic necessity.” I would be remiss, however, if I were not to allow that my introduction to institutional power was positive in the sense that, despite its ambiguity, many lives were saved.

## Observer Responses

(1) *Stephen Jefferies, Management Consultant*  
*Waterloo, Ontario*

I was surprised that the conference did not begin with prayer or some type of fellowship. My surprise arose because you were looking to discover new answers to nagging and difficult issues. It seems to me that if you want new insights, you have to have faith. In other words, if the answers have already been figured out, then the job is to find out where those answers are. You could just ask people who had already figured them out. And, correctly, you invited learned people to this conference for that reason, among others, I would guess.

On the other hand, if answers are also going to come from innovation and creative thinking, then you must tap into your intuitive side, your sensing, and your unconscious free-wheeling side. As humans we seem to do that best when we are free-spirited and joyful. Prayer and singing can help tap that in all of us. But you didn't start out that way. An oversight? Maybe, but Lawrence Burkholder gave a clue when he said "it is scary (looking at ourselves) because I wonder where this is all going." Sometimes when we are not sure of outcomes, we forget or are afraid to tap all of our resources.

This became apparent in the group discussions. Many people leapt immediately to discuss the right or wrong of the first two keynote speakers. Both Celia Hahn and Bill Klassen's addresses contained many sides. The safe side, though, was usually taken. Klassen's challenge to address the way a mother handled her gay son's admission and subsequent suicide was avoided outright. I was struck with the judgmental attitude that prevailed rather than trying to create some open space. Participants tended to choose the safe subjects to jump into and just flirted with the controversial ones.

The discussion on leadership development captured the essence of my overall observations. The speakers were eloquent, and I will always remember the images of Lawrence Martin's ancestors leaving St. Jacobs, shunned, Shirley Showalter handing the candle to a gay person and hugging her in front of many observers, and Paul Born's describing the joy of his children. What jumped out at me was that the issue of feeling was so important

to the subject. Showalter's message was telling. She stepped onto a platform without a safety net. That is, she did not seem to need an answer, a conclusion before committing to action. She just took a chance. I probably heard eight to ten examples of this during the conference and about ninety percent of the time it came from women. My point is that generally the female message seemed different from the male message, but that fact was either lost on many or avoided. Often when feelings were talked about, someone would quickly change the subject and the messenger would be silenced. All would gain if many of the men would learn to really listen (with empathy), and many of the women would learn to be more assertive, not aggressive.

You talked a lot about power and tried to define it. You did an admirable job. But you may have missed some of the target by not squarely addressing abuses of power within the church and the church community, including families. For example, no one mentioned the power of silencing. Yet you did that to one another often during this conference. The gay issue was raised on several occasions but not addressed as a power issue by the assembly. Power is a big subject and should be studied from all angles. Then you can look at the use of power as good or bad, rather than trying to group it into one issue.

(2) *Mark A. Schaan, Student*

*Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario*

Most people at this conference are white, highly educated, middle-class individuals, and the majority are male. The most important distinction is that you are all exceptionally powerful. You are the ones already in the roles. There are very few who are "the led" in this group. A cynic could say this conference is "the people in power wishing to get together to talk about the fact that they have it and to define what it is they have." I do not see this cynicism as valid. I commend you on being critical of your own power structures and their failings and successes. I would also urge you to understand your own desires for power and your own personal agendas.

I encourage you to take this discussion back to the place you lead. It is of key importance that the discussion on power and authority is brought to the powerless, that we have the courage and the daring to extend this



conversation. The goal of a participatory and cohesive group of Mennonites can not be achieved unless, like our famous four-part harmony, all the parts are heard.

**Negotiation of the gap**

We as Mennonites are still content to believe we do power and authority right and exude it to the world. Possibly because this group is the leadership group of the Mennonites, possibly because we do not want to expose our vulnerability, we acknowledge the gap between the ideal and the reality yet still pat ourselves on the back for how good everyone thinks we are. We cannot accept that we rise “like chaff to God,” that we are imperfect. The comment was even made this weekend that “my friends are still impressed with how we as Mennonites do authority and that we clearly must be doing it right.” I would encourage us to admit the gap and expose it, because if we continue to veil it we do nothing but further it.

We are also faced with the lack of language to express the in-betweens. There has been intense debate at this conference over whether an acknowledgment of the gap is simply an admission of our complacency in it. I vehemently disagree. We as Mennonites continue to misuse power and authority, and to shift towards exclusive power as opposed to partnered power, because we are afraid of admitting reality. Mennonites, known for their isolation and their devoutness, have real problems dealing with the realities of situations and most notably with conflicts.

We need to create a venue, a forum, and a way in which to discuss the tension and the reality of living between complacency and idealism. Without a method of expressing this gap, we will continue to ignore it, to pretend to deal with it, but still to perpetuate and pass it on to our youth.

**Action-oriented directives and conflict**

One of the most common tendencies of youth is to be easily frustrated by too much talk. I happen to be an exception to this rule—I dream of policy at night and love to have riveting discussions on procedure and constitution. Yet even I felt at times this weekend that there was perhaps too little concentration on action.

It seemed that we got too hung up on definitions, on respective authors' opinions, that we concentrated too much on what was to be said on power and authority and too little on what is to be done. Finally, through all of our discussion on books and theology, Shirley Showalter gave us concrete evidence of her definition of servant leadership. With the simple extension of a hand to a potential outcast of her community came the embodiment that I had craved. The power of Shirley's actions was made clear by the fact that from her statement forward, everyone wanted to use her example. Yet I don't feel that their definitions embodied her actions. I would have liked to hear more individual concrete examples of leadership, power, and authority in reality.

The other topic I felt we ignored for most of the conference was that of conflict. I commend Celia Hahn on her wonderful interpretations of authority and her prodding to allow us to be moved again to participatory churching. Yet I feel there is a piece missing in Hahn's push to integrative authority. Someone in a small group commented, "Consensus problem-solving drives me nuts!" The utopia of integrative authority is still a long way off. The failure of trying to allow everyone to participate and achieve individual wholeness and therefore group acceptance is that it cannot appropriately deal with conflict. When there are strong opinions, disagreements in values, and differences in approaching conflict, it is not easy or even plausible at times simply to embrace the paradox.

This past summer in my church a friend delivered an address on her experiences at camp and its ministry. Just previous to this, she had dyed her hair a brilliant blue. After the service, she received in her mailbox a handwritten note which informed her that her blue hair was a clear sign of her disrespect for herself and for the congregation, that she was clearly troubled, and that no one could value her ministry because of this choice she had made. The note was unsigned. I raise this because, no matter how integrative we are, no matter how much the leadership wants to accept and embrace the paradoxes, there is often no action to be taken or venue to deal with conflict in this system when value judgements pervade.

I urge you to confront conflict and to create venues where appropriate discussion of conflict can occur and where participatory authority can solve problems that seem so deeply rooted.

I thank you all for allowing me to be a part of this event. I encourage you not to end this discussion, or else history will be so cyclical that my generation will make the same abuses and misuses of power that occurred in previous generations. I also encourage you to build the leadership in ways that appropriately deal with power and authority, and to create in us, the youth, a sense of action towards a just and rightly powerful church.

(3) *Marsha A. Hewitt, Professor of Religious Studies*  
*University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario*

How power and authority are deployed, who has them, who wants them, how to resolve competing claims to them—these and other issues are extremely difficult for groups and organizations to address, especially Christian churches. Christian groups and individuals tend to feel uneasy about these realities, partly because confronting questions of power and authority within church structures forces them to accept the fact that, in many respects, they and their churches are very much *in* the world rather than being merely *of* it. This means Christians possess no necessary ethical superiority when it comes to the acquisition and wielding of power.

Quite often, the avenues of redress within many churches for injustices concerning their own employees are not as adequate as in the larger society, if they exist at all. Moreover, there doesn't seem to be a widespread sense that there is much need for specific policies or mechanisms for resolution of grievances within churches. A few years ago I attended a meeting of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, where I spoke in favor of our adopting some human rights provisions. There was a great deal of resistance to this resolution among the delegates. People speaking against it expressed the view that as Christians we do not need such codes, given our (natural? inherent? automatic?) commitment to peace and harmonious resolution of conflict that flows from our theological belief in God's love, which we are mandated to practice toward one another. Human rights codes and other mechanisms of redress were considered by some as perhaps necessary in the "secular" world, where the commandment to love one's neighbor as God loves us is not taken as seriously as in Christian communities.

Surely Christians are capable of solving problems without the aid of grievance structures imported from the outside, it was felt.

It is often difficult for Christians to admit that they often abuse power, and that their churches are at times no better, in fact perhaps worse, in treating their employees with fairness and justice than other sectors of society. By church employees I have in mind primarily clergy, who, despite their clerical status *are* employees nonetheless of their institutions and who must behave with a degree of loyalty like any other employees in any other institution, whether they agree with its practices and policies or not. This question of the pastor as employee, who must walk the same fine line as any other employee, was addressed at the conference by Sue Steiner. She spoke of the contradictions involved in acting as a pastor to her congregation while having the equally important “task of surviving” as an employee of the church, which she saw as part of being a leader and exercising power. She also identified an inherent confusion in exercising leadership in congregations in an age where one needs to do it “without seeming to.”

In a time when power and authority are largely confused and identified strictly with authoritarianism and hierarchical control, there is a tendency for mystification and obfuscation to cloud our ability to clarify what leadership, especially in ecclesial contexts, actually *means*. Bill Klassen commented that church colleges, for example, seem to be among the worst abusers of human rights for their employees. How “decent” an employer the church often is was called into question, and Klassen further commented on the fact that sometimes governments have to force churches to adhere to basic standards of human rights for their employees.

The issue of the church as employer, and pastors as professionalized spiritual leaders, requires deeper exploration as a prerequisite to any meaningful discussion about power and authority in the Mennonite or any other church. A highly regarded employee is usually one whose value is measured in direct proportion to his/her perceived obedience and loyalty to the employer. But what if the employer, in this case the church, is grievously wrong about some very important social justice issues, so that it ends up perpetrating injustice and damaging human lives through its own intolerance for difference? What is the leadership responsibility of pastors if and when they disagree with

church teachings and policies? Although it was apparent that many people who attended the conference understood this issue to be a real dilemma at times, there was also a deep reluctance to address it directly. It was only gradually that I became aware that the question of homosexuality is an extremely painful, divisive, and frightening issue for Mennonite congregations. Although it was mentioned, no one at the conference said that the Mennonite Church must rethink its teachings on homosexuality or at least take a stand embracing tolerance and full inclusiveness within the congregations of homosexual persons.

This question of the treatment of homosexuals also arose in remarks by Shirley Showalter as well as frequently and very indirectly in informal comments made by people alluding to the divisive situation in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Showalter spoke movingly of some problems dividing the student body at Goshen concerning homosexuality. She related a poignant narrative about a gay woman student who at a public gathering bravely proclaimed herself to be a human being, not a social issue. Although Showalter seemed to suggest that she had no problem with homosexuality, which was strongly implied in her remarks concerning the need to provide a “safe space” for marginalized voices where contradiction and ambiguity can be held and explored without fear, she did not tell the conference what the actual situation is concerning homosexual students at Goshen College. Are there mechanisms and avenues within the college bureaucracy that protect the full participation and inclusion of homosexuals in all aspects of student life? Where does the administration stand on the question of full rights and support for gay students? Does the college plan to devise a statement concerning the protected place of gay and lesbian students within the academic community? Is the college in the process of drafting policies and procedures against discrimination of students based on sexual orientation, if such do not already exist? Do leaders in the administration desire such policies and procedures to be drafted, if none exist?

One of the tasks of leadership, especially in church contexts, is to exercise a prophetic voice by taking public stands on social justice issues, to enter into concrete and effective solidarity with the marginalized and excluded *within* their own community. By effective solidarity I have in mind James 2:17, where it says “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” The difficulties

and dangers involved for leaders in taking up effective solidarity with those their churches look upon as sinful are not to be underestimated. This is why the question of the ethics and political realities of being an employee of the church as raised by Sue Steiner is so vital.

As for the situation in Germantown and the church's expulsion from the Franconia Conference, it was mentioned only briefly and often with great anguish, but never openly discussed. It should have been discussed at this gathering as a way of coming to concrete grips with the politics of Mennonite teaching and religious values. It might have been a plausible idea to consider the possibility of discussing the validity of Mennonite teaching on homosexuality itself, and asking some hard questions about the justice of that teaching and whether it should be openly challenged. One of the key tasks of religious leadership is that it be *prophetic leadership*, which involves the courage to take political risks within ecclesial structures by challenging prevailing teachings when they cause needless human suffering. Perhaps the conference could have agreed to issue a call to all Mennonite congregations to discuss openly what just treatment of homosexuals ought to be, and how to handle situations where congregations disagree with pastoral leadership on such issues. It means very little to talk of the need to include the voices of the marginalized and the excluded without taking concrete steps to create the objective, real space where they can speak and be heard with a view to changing the structures that have excluded and punished them for who they are. Telling stories in the absence of these structures is not enough.

Let me conclude with a word of caution: Beware narrative! There was widespread enthusiasm at the conference for telling stories, but while narratives have their usefulness, they can provide palliative substitutes for political action. Stories have a way of making the hearers feel good, and can even offer the illusion that the telling of the story in itself is enough to change the world. It isn't. Narratives provide a safe, comfortable, but illusory retreat from the very dangerous, unpleasant activity of struggling against the injustices perpetrated by institutions that support us and with which we deeply identify. Narratives do not provide a safe space for telling the stories of injustice in the absence of structures that ensure a sustained and ongoing safety beyond the narrative space.

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No institution or community that exists in this world is free of politics, and it is politics that infuses the difficult realities of power and authority, whether we like it or not. One of the most difficult realizations for most Christians is that religion is political—political because it is practiced in the world, between people, not beyond it. This conference was not able to confront the political realities of its religious identity, values, commitments, and ecclesial structures. There were some notable efforts, but they did not go far, at least not at this time. But the fact that so many leaders in the Mennonite Church came together in a spirit of sincerity and good will to at least acknowledge the existence of power and authority in their church, with a view to thinking about these issues in new, creative, and caring ways, is a hopeful sign that winds of change may well be blowing throughout the community.

## Responses to Previous Issue

Margaret Loewen Reimer, “Mennonites and the Artistic Imagination,” and Magdalene Redekop, “The Painted Body Stares Back: Five Female Artists and the ‘Mennonite’ Spectator,” both in *The Conrad Grebel Review*, Fall 1998 (16:3), 6-49.

*Susan D. Shantz, Associate Professor of Fine Arts  
University of Saskatchewan*

The Fall 1998 issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review* bore a reproduction of an artwork I made over ten years ago, “Ancestral Spirits: Bed.” I made it when I was a graduate student, as a study for what I was imagining to be a more complete and finished work constructed of tidily sewn fabric rather than hastily cut and taped photocopy paper. During my studies I was challenged to rethink some of my habits of artmaking, to become more attentive to my own creative process, less controlling of the end product. I began to see that this piece was already complete.

In making “Ancestral Spirits: Bed” the Mennonite spectator *in me* was having fun and doing serious thinking about what Magdalene Redekop identifies (according to Roland Barthes) as the “studium” photograph. Taking a family wedding portrait, two generations removed from me, the model of “respectability, family life, conformism, Sunday best” (Barthes) and altering it slightly to reveal *what else* that wedding and Mennonite ancestral lineage is about: a reverence for family ties, continuity, progeneration, and sexuality. The ancestors as saints, their ubiquitous photographs as household icons; their sexuality implicit, but suppressed.

Seeing a reproduction of this artwork on the cover of a Mennonite publication allows me to revisit the time of making this piece and my own Mennonite youth. In another piece from this series (“Ancestral Spirits: Wings”) I modified the image of an adolescent ancestor so that her stiff arms, clad in a heavy Victorian coat, became wings in motion. I wanted to express, through her, something of the complex longings so characteristic of youth: longings of the spirit as well as the body.



When I looked at old photographs to consider using them, I saw primarily rigidities of posture and expression. While not necessarily the true character of my ancestors (their somberness in part due to the stillness required with early photographic techniques), the photographs symbolized for me what Sandra Birdsell was quoted as identifying as “Mennonites . . . joyless search for meaning.” While I imagined my good ancestors to be in heaven, I had to invent a heaven where their heavy judgementalism was transformed into lightness in order to release myself from their watchful gaze. I invested the inhabitants of this heaven with the virtues of compassion, generosity of spirit, and a bemused, not-taking-ourselves-too-seriously sense of humor.

The contradictions and paradoxes I was discovering in adolescence to be part of a less-than-perfect world compelled me to search for a language capable of expressing such complexities. I found it in the language of art. Margaret Loewen Reimer states that Mennonites have seen art as dangerous because it is unpredictable, uncontrollable. But our ancestors—their very deaths—remind us that so is life when we feel its impermanences and our own vulnerabilities. The photographs seem static, still, permanent. It was against such a view of reality that I was straining when I altered these images. “Which stories are true?” Loewen Reimer asks. And adds, “Memory will trick you. Your parents will trick you. The church will trick you. Look deeper to find meaning.” Certainly it has been my experience that “imagination can help us face the contradictions and hold them together within a larger understanding.”

Loewen Reimer’s examples of imaginative art are mostly literary. She admits that when she encountered visual images in reviewing a book of liturgical art, she was “bowled over” and suggests that, for a Mennonite viewer, the book should have contained a warning: “Beware the shock of encountering the spirit made visible.” My own experience of first encountering visual art was in a required class, “The Aesthetic Experience,” taught by Mary Oyer at Goshen College. I, too, was bowled over—but because I felt, at last, at home. Here was a language—of spatial dimensions, color and form—that corresponded to some deep way of understanding and knowing for which I had previously had no external referent. The sensation was physical, embodied: I could breathe deeply and freely here. I could relax into *seeing* and through it find my way to understanding. Not everything I saw was easy, not all of it did I want to call “art,” but often what challenged me, nagged me,

and clung to my memory proved to “expand [my] experience of reality, to reveal more angles of the truth” (Loewen Reimer). It is especially contemporary art with its more “tentative and vulnerable truths” that I have found increasingly compelling, even though I often find myself, when viewing it, poised like Redekop’s Mennonite spectator “between fear and desire.” It is the work of my contemporaries, more than that of the past, that challenges my own assumptions and the comforts of what I already know, unseating perhaps unconscious fears which may conceal deeper desires.

In turning her attention solely to visual art, Redekop, also trained in literature, attempts the difficult task for a Mennonite viewer of theorizing visual art and imagining how a Mennonite spectator might respond. She postulates a decorative element in the work of Mennonite artists, historical in its origins, that goes against the dominant mimetic grain in Western art. And she imagines an “ekphrastic response” in the Mennonite viewer as an extension of the old iconoclasm: that place between fear and desire. In reconciling my passion for art with my “artless” tradition, I felt strongly those emotional dichotomies and needed to distance myself from my culture in order to work freely as an artist. Initially, I too sought the decorative thread in Mennonite visual culture: quilts, nineteenth-century calligraphy, decorated furniture. To an extent they reminded me that visual elements, an appreciation of beauty, were not antithetical to being Mennonite. But questions remained, despite my appreciation for decorative elements and strategies in art. I had to seriously *look* for these elements: open cedar chests to find the quilts, visit museums, and read art historical books to find the calligraphy and furniture. What surrounded me in my suburban Mennonite home was not that different from what hung on the walls, adorned the beds, and filled the T.V. screen of my non-Mennonite neighbors: mass-produced images and products. Visually, weren’t many of our homes decorated with whatever was current in popular decorating? These items were more easily incorporated into our lives than “fine art.”<sup>1</sup> I was a generation removed from the hand-made traditions of necessity, a decade ahead of their nostalgic revival, living in my childhood during a period of enthusiasm for media and emerging technologies.

Do Mennonite ways of seeing (or not seeing) visual art contain a residue of iconoclasm, Redekop asks. In my experience Mennonites are more likely to *not* see art than to see it, and a distinctive Mennonite visual culture, never

as strong as a literary/biblical or musical culture, is muted if not invisible at the end of the twentieth century. A survey of paintings in Mennonite homes would likely reveal the presence of more mimetic renditions (the paintings of Peter Etril Snyder, for example) than those informed by a decorative aesthetic; the popularity of paintings that “look like a photograph” is strong in Western culture, as Redekop acknowledges, and Mennonites are not immune. Decorative elements in the work of the five artists she discusses, are, I suspect, a response to trends in contemporary art as all of us work with awareness of our artistic communities. This may be as much, if not more, a part of our imaginative framework as is our Mennonitism. Wanda Koop attended a major international art show in Venice where she saw the work of Louise Bourgeois, an eminent contemporary sculptor. This, along with a stay in Japan, informed her creation of a new piece of art more, I suspect, than her Mennonite past.

If I am cautious in postulating a decorative Mennonite aesthetic, I am intrigued by the concept of an “ekphrastic response.” Fear and desire, often unconscious and two sides of the same coin, are frequently manifest as anger in many viewers of contemporary art, whether Mennonite or not. Much contemporary art challenges our very notion of what art is. A surprising number of contemporary Canadian artists, often in the vanguard of the art community, come from Mennonite backgrounds. Is there a willingness, part of our more distant radical religious heritage, to articulate a personal vision, despite the weight of conformism that has shaped the Mennonite community since its visionary inception? A willingness, on the part of these artists, to dig through to deeper desires, despite surface fears?

In a recent article, Joan Borsa, a curator and art theorist, wrote about the work of Aganetha Dyck and me in terms of a “relational aesthetics.”<sup>2</sup> She also discusses a third, non-Mennonite artist, and is not proposing this aesthetic as Mennonite, although I was intrigued by it in light of my background. Borsa acknowledges that all of us are “working completely within the forum of contemporary art . . . yet referencing systems more associated with . . . the private sphere, the realms of the domestic, the female, the rural, the natural and the everyday environment.” What interests me is this theorist’s attempt to find language for the “physicality of these situations . . . [which are] outside of predictable systems of knowledge,” which are not nostalgic but “an

acknowledgement that something is at stake . . . something is pressing that deserves our time and attention, that needs to be made into art, into discourse and theory.” Could the work of Gathie Falk, Lois Klassen and Wanda Koop also be fruitfully considered in terms of “relational aesthetics?” What is at stake—what art seeks to draw our attention to—is in these examples an understanding of the deeper parts of our humanity, of what we may be losing to “the grain of mass-media culture” even as we use these media (Falk’s recorded songs, Klassen’s electrical cords and lights, Dyck’s glass cases and clothing, Koop’s video notes, my photocopies) to offer a different perspective.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The readiness of Mennonites to incorporate popular artifacts into their homes may be as much a function of class as of historical iconoclasm: “fine art” is often seen as belonging to the upper classes, not the middle where most Mennonites would position themselves. Classism also informs the debate as to what can be called “art” and the historical exclusion of crafts and objects of popular culture from this category. Nevertheless, I want to acknowledge a category of art, often called “fine art,” that has moved me deeply and that, as Loewen Reimer suggests, “springs from the coming together of the senses, the intellect and the emotions . . . [and that] can help us bring together the different realms of our experience.”

<sup>2</sup> Joan Borsa, “Performing Interconnectedness: The Cathartic Installations of Aganetha Dyck, Ann Hamilton and Susan Shantz,” in *n.paradoxa*, vol. 3, 1999.

Cheryl Nafziger-Leis, "A-Dialogue with Adorno: So, What About the Impossibility of Religious Art Today?" and Phil Stoltzfus, "Performative Envisioning: An Aesthetic Critique of Mennonite Theology," both in *The Conrad Grebel Review*, Fall 1998 (16:3), 50-91.

*Paul Keim, Academic Dean  
Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana*

My first response to the report of Zwingli's iconoclastic orgy of 1524, with which Phil Stoltzfus begins his paper, was: "Hey, I grew up in that church!" Of course at the time we didn't realize we were aesthetically impoverished. We just thought we were "plain" and "separated from the world" and "faithful." The irony is that as we Mennonites have become less distinctive culturally in North America, we've become receptive to many of the "religious arts" characteristic of popular and civil religion, from Christian music and television to the petty, triumphalist pretense of contemporary church architecture ("Give us steeples like the nations!"). Frankly, if forced to choose between no art and low art, I prefer plain (note: this false dichotomy is intended solely as a rhetorical device). But did Anabaptist iconoclasm, ingested honestly while sucking theological colostrum at the Zwinglian breast, actually represent the recovery of the supposed anti-image ethos of Israelite religion? Or was it perhaps a late-medieval reassertion of Swiss austerity—a national trait observable to the present day?

Both of these papers intend to challenge Mennonite biblical scholars and theologians to reflect on the aesthetic interface between art and religion. These terms are fraught with difficulty. Cheryl Nafziger-Leis is especially careful to provide working definitions of the terms that help frame the discussion.

This theme may prove a particular challenge to those of us oriented to texts and words, who tend to consider the speechlessness of the arts a kind of formlessness, creativity of a second order. After all, we have Lord Logos on our side. The music, the objets d'art, the drama, these are considered supplementary—even subservient—to the text, be it scripture or lyric or caption or dialogue. I went through a world-class doctoral program in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) Languages and Civilizations without learning anything about

ANE art. The logocentric bias inherent in the program was so profound that we didn't even realize we were missing something. Our aesthetic sensibilities were exercised only in the analysis of writing systems. We knew but were not mindful of the implications of the second creation account of Genesis, devoid of the speech-act, where instead of "God said, Let there be light, and there was light," we read "Yahweh God formed the earthling," the language of the potter, the artisan.

I found an interesting point of contact with Nafziger-Leis's discussion of Adorno's "aniconic" orientation, affirmed from his Jewish background. This is an old crux in the study of Israelite religion. Why no images in Israel, when the rest of the world seemed to have no qualms about producing images of their deities and divinized heroes? Circumstantial evidence in the Bible and extra-biblical sources suggests that Israelite tradition perpetuated either a deep-seated misunderstanding of the use of images in ANE religions (cf. Thorkild Jacobsen's article, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion*, eds. P. Miller et al. [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 15-32) or a radical critique of that cultural practice. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's treatment of the issue in his book *God's Phallus* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) connects it with another theme identified in these papers, that of the corporeality of aesthetic experience, and the estrangement of body and belief that may result from such aversion to image. Eilberg-Schwartz conjectures that religious iconography is eschewed in Israelite tradition because any representation of the deity's body leads to speculation about the deity's sexuality. Whether this thesis has merit or not, it names part of our discomfort with the body-lessness of religious experience, a discomfort sharpened by exclusive focus on texts and the neglect or subjugation of art to ideology.

The one exception in that iconoclastic church I grew up in was a large picture of Jesus the shepherd which hung behind the pulpit (I don't know the artist), whereby my first images of the mystery of the incarnation took the shape of a long-haired white man in a bathrobe, a figure neither young nor old, neither manly nor effeminate. A more historically realistic rendering of Jesus as a first-century Jewish Palestinian would have scared the children and left the elders without a clear personification of their authority. In retrospect I think that even a Catholic crucifix would have been better pedagogy, in that it reveals the passion, the desire, the suffering—and thereby

the corporeality—of the incarnation. Nafziger-Leis invites us to take seriously (though not necessarily accept uncritically) Adorno’s claim that the use of art and images to depict the ineffable is a distortion, perhaps even blasphemy.

If what she concludes as to the tenuous possibility of religious art is true, then what about our rather glib assumption that religious *language* is possible? We say “Yahweh” (instead of “Adonay” or “Hashem”) because the text, the ur-text, has YHWH, and we do not shudder in awe at its pronunciation. *Sola scriptura*, we insist. But could our constant, unabashed, naming of God (assuming we know what we mean, and that those hearing this language used know who or what is meant) be a sign of our confusion, our presumption, our petulant piety? And if religious language is possible only in the tentative way she suggests, then perhaps there are too many of us to say the little that can be said.

On the other hand, language too is composed of the elements of the arts: the music of its phonology; the visual symbolism of its writing systems; the drama of its performance. That texts incorporate these artistic elements suggests that the aesthetic of hermeneutics (and theology, as Stoltzfus suggests) and the practice of interpretation need to be informed by a broader set of sensitivities than those of literary criticism, and must be shaped in part by our immersion in the creative imagination of the arts. Why have we interpreted the *qol demamah daqqah* of the theophany in 1 Kings 19 as a “still, small voice,” i.e., as a text, albeit whispered and understated, rather than, say, as music? The Hebrew phrase could just as well describe a fleeting tone, a faint resonance, an indeterminate setting of the airwaves to dance. Yet we demand a word.

Stoltzfus says that though Mennonites have engaged in some creative and even artistic activities, and though some of our ethics and theologizing reflects an aesthetic (he even finds it in Harold Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision”—something I somehow missed on the first twenty read-throughs; and why did I never before think of “Vision” as having to do with the sense of sight rather than as a euphemism for doctrine, prescription, normativity?), we have not devoted much sustained philosophical, systematic effort to a reflection upon the meaning of art, nor made it an integral part of our theological articulation, nor utilized our native artistic instincts in identity formation.

Perhaps this lack of effort is just an honest extension of our preference for unreflective practice, due to the high demands of discipleship and the dangers of speculative theologizing. But these papers remind us that there is no practice uninformed by somebody's reflection (cf. that great American theologian, Bob Dylan: "Ehhhh, you gotta serve somebody"). Part of our motivation to embrace the arts is to explore the animating spirit of our culture in ways that lead perhaps to more authentic and vital discipleship, a more fully realized incarnation, and eventually as meaningful praxis with its own inherent value.

These two papers have reminded me of what Parker Palmer, in *The Courage to Teach*, calls "the grace of great things." As teachers and learners we gather together around the great things which make up the subject matter of our disciplines. More and more I find myself drawn to great things which fall formally outside the texts of my discipline, yet seem deeply relevant to and resonant with those great things I hold most dear.

But can we form and sustain Anabaptist/Mennonite community around the more ambiguous great things of the arts? Will they help us to find our identity as a community, to provide a basis for discerning justice? The challenge which Nafziger-Leis and Stoltzfus have laid before us should feel like a casting-off of the ropes of text-based anchorage, a setting adrift from the doctrinal pier, a departure from the verbalized certainty of firm earth beneath our feet, a floating untethered upon the sea of hegemonic culture. We have proven that we as a community can gather around a text and generate a shared performance (ethics). But the notion of gathering around art as a basis for establishing any kind of normativity seems absurd. What performance results? What community results? And if the conventional way of articulating who we are is no longer operational, then how do we know who we are?



## Book Reviews

*Christian Voluntarism: Theology and Praxis.* William H. Brackney.  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.

Voluntarism is at the heart of contemporary church practice, regardless of denomination. Whether we consider Sunday school teachers, ushers, committee members, youth sponsors, women's mission groups, or deacons, the church could not survive without a myriad of volunteers supporting the church's vision in very tangible ways. However, little theological reflection has been done on this topic as it relates to current church practices. In *Christian Voluntarism*, William Brackney examines the biblical and theological foundations of voluntarism in the church and provides a historical survey of Christian voluntarism over the centuries, focusing particularly on Britain and North America.

The Judeo-Christian Scriptures exemplify a voluntary impulse which was central to cultural activities; the New Testament emphasizes the voluntary human response to a sovereign God, embodied by the self-sacrificial nature of Jesus. The issue of human capability and will in relation to God's sovereignty has been widely debated ever since. Brackney traces this argument from writers such as Origen and Pelagius, who stressed human free will, to Augustine, who reacted against it. Later, under the influence of the Renaissance, a more "enlightened" Christianity emerged, with a greater toleration and renewed emphasis on human freedom. Writers such as John Locke, and such Christians as the Baptists, Puritans, Anglicans, and Methodists, made significant contributions toward a "practical" theology of voluntarism which eventually spread from Britain to North America. Brackney includes not only a historical description of the theological issues surrounding voluntarism but also a sociological reflection of its internal and external patterns. He examines the life cycle of a typical religious voluntary association and reflects on the functions of associations in their religious and social contexts.

In the second half of his book, "Praxis" (it is not clear whether he uses this term simply to describe church "practice" or to reflect the more accurate

meaning of “transformative action”), Brackney examines voluntarism in the contemporary North American church, specifically exploring voluntary associations related to the church and the interrelationship of the church and parachurch. He concludes by describing the enduring values of Christian voluntarism for the church and the world.

As a Mennonite steeped in the believers’ church tradition and one whose family was immersed in the work of the congregation, Mennonite Central Committee, and church conferences, I was intrigued by the book’s subject matter, both theologically and practically. Unfortunately in an attempt to provide breadth, a number of critical issues are dealt with minimally or not addressed at all. Particularly striking is the obvious absence of the radical reformation as providing a significant theological basis for a volunteer church, with the author describing John Locke as “among the first to define sharply the nature of the voluntary church and its theological foundation”(35). The correlation between voluntarism and believer’s baptism as described and practiced by the early Anabaptists cannot be ignored and clearly needs further theological reflection.

Few would argue against the merits of Christian voluntarism for both the church and society—the survival of the church has depended upon the free commitment of time and energy to serve. Yet even the virtue of service reflected by voluntarism has come at a cost. A number of years ago while attending council meetings for the Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe, my Mennonite sisters and brothers in developing countries reminded me that even our best intentions as North Americans can lead to dependency, loss of dignity, and ultimately loss of identity on the part of those who are on the receiving end. What happens to those who are volunteered to? This question is unasked and unanswered.

There is yet another potential cost to a concentrated focus on Christian voluntarism and service. Our Mennonite emphasis on discipleship, service, and obedience has sometimes led us to forfeit an equally strong emphasis on the grace and mercy of God. We act out of faith. It is through the grace and love of God that we are empowered to become obedient to Christ through discipleship. We know from the Biblical text that love of God and love of

neighbor are intrinsically related. Brackney does well to remind us in the conclusion of his book that we need to ground our ethics, our action, in the action of God.

IRMA FAST DUECK, University of Toronto

*A World Without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I.* Frances H. Early. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

This book is a history of the “Bureau of Legal Advice,” an organization in New York created to defend civil liberties of persons victimized by intolerance in World War I. The Bureau lasted from 1917 to 1920. It was the first effective civil liberties association sponsored by the radical wing of the peace movement. Its history has been obscured by popular fascination with the Civil Liberties Bureau and its charismatic leader, Roger Baldwin, and by a gender bias which has ignored the contributions of women.

Francis May Witherspoon, founder and leader of the Bureau, was from a family of lawyers in Mississippi and was a graduate of Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia. Witherspoon and her lifelong partner, Tracy Dickinson Mygatt, were middle-class idealistic socialists and pacifists—joiners and creators of humanitarian organizations. Their Bureau mobilized the good work of a battery of lawyers, the most important of whom was Charles Recht, a Bohemian immigrant radical who was also a poet, linguist, and nonreligious conscientious objector to war. By the end of the war, the Bureau had sponsored some forty-five court cases in behalf of persons whose rights of speech and personal behavior had been violated in the overheated context of war. Witherspoon’s work with the Bureau also included advocacy for persons caught in the military conscription system, both draftees and their dependents, against their rights and consciences. Local draft boards did not respect the rights of alien Germans and Austro-Hungarians to be exempt from fighting against their countrymen. After the war the Bureau intervened creatively in behalf of the “Ellis Island Deportees,” a group of fifty-three men and one woman who had been detained without charges and held for deportation as radical aliens. The Bureau went out of existence in 1920, as the radical feminist-pacifist movement fell apart in an age of postwar reaction.

The distinctive contribution of this book, in addition to mining the untapped rich sources of the Bureau of Legal Advice, is the author's insightful interpretation of gender issues and relationships among left-wing pacifists in World War I. Witherspoon had to struggle with the fact that her anti-war civil libertarian allies, such as Roger Baldwin, exhibited an anti-feminist bias. Male leaders in the Socialist party tended to slight female leadership. Early shows how the war elevated the ultramasculine soldier ideal, and how militant patriots subjected conscientious objectors to "gender ridicule." Pacifists were not real men. The correspondence of Bruno Grunzig, an absolutist political conscientious objector who volunteered to help the Bureau, showed him defending his masculine self-image over against religious COs who were scorned as unmanly.

The author evaluates the work of Witherspoon and her pacifist-socialist-feminist allies in terms of their contribution toward "Creating a Peace Culture"—the title of the final chapter of the book. Witherspoon, Early says, developed "a fundamental critique of the patriarchal warmaking state." She confronted the fact that gender inequality afflicted the anti-war subculture in profound ways. Her recognition of these issues earns her status, in the author's view, as an important contributor to an evolving peace culture.

This book covers a smaller range than its title suggests. Nor does it include a clear definition of the "peace culture" concept which is so important to its interpretive frame. Readers from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition will be prompted to make comparisons of the New York anti-war radicals with the anti-war stance of the nonresistant religious sectarians who supplied the strong majority of conscientious objectors in World War I. The traditional Mennonite subculture exhibited its own forms of patriarchy. Mennonite COs struggled with accusations that they were unmanly as surely as did secular COs. One point of agreement between historian Frances Early and the Mennonite tradition is that a genuine culture of peace must reflect peaceable relationships at the personal and local level, as well as in national and international politics.

Frances Early is chair of the History Department at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and has served as president of the bi-national Peace History Society. Her book appears in, "Syracuse Studies on

Peace and Conflict Resolution,” one of the most extensive and distinguished series in the burgeoning field of peace studies.

JAMES C. JUHNKE, Bethel College, North Newton, KS

Dallas Wiebe. *Our Asian Journey: A Novel*. Waterloo, ON.: MLR Editions Canada, 1997

In the late 1990s cultural studies pundits are shifting signifiers yet again. Once post-structural and then postmodernist, we are now, I am given to understand, post-historical. The term is not surprising, and even if it never gains the popularity of the more inclusive earlier terms, it does serve as a highly useful indicator of contemporary programs generally. We dwell in a time in which histories are either conveniently forgotten or re-formed according to prevailing winds of doctrine.

Nor is it surprising that in a so-called post-historical era, the historical novel should be undergoing a revival. With singular certitude Foundational nominalists insist on the priority of pluralities and object in full abstractions to all other abstractions as culturally imperialistic. Beside such juxtapositions, particularly as traditional narratives fall into disrepute, new fictional representations of history are required to replace forgotten and fragmented explanations of the past. Canadians, struggling with national unity, have Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), a narrative “embroider[ing] around each one [of her characters] with red feather-stitching, to blend them in as a part of the pattern,” in some renovated Edenic Tree of Life, itself a quilted fabrication, graceful and grace-giving at the close of a millennium (460). There are some interesting parallels here with the British author, Jane Rogers, who opens her *Mr. Wroe's Virgins* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991; also based on an early nineteenth-century incident, John Wroe's formation of a Christian Israelite sect) with an epigram from Thomas Paine—“We have it in our power to begin the world over again”—and closes with a description of a female protagonist's death as a crucified Christ. For post-historical men and women new beginnings appear understandable only in old frameworks.

Both Atwood and Rogers provide epilogues to their works, briefly outlining the “real” history on which their narratives are based. The pattern is common in such fiction recently (cf. Rudy Wiebe’s *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994). It is a rhetorical ploy on the part of the author to assure the modern reader that the ‘novel’ is indeed ‘true.’

Dallas Wiebe—perhaps closer to a tradition than Rogers, certainly less self-assured than Atwood, and possibly more aware than either of the implicit ironies and contradictions in the post-historical writing of historical novels—chooses a different path. Like them he writes through the eyes of a first-person narrator, but unlike them he shapes his narrative with an eye to the novel not only as aesthetic form based on historical sources but also as historical source. At the heart of his work is a 262-page diary kept by Joseph Toevs between 1880 and 1885 when he journeyed with Claass Epp Jr. on the latter’s great trek eastward to Tashkent in Turkestan to be present at the Second Coming in 1889. Epp is never mentioned by name in the book; a sort of apotheosis takes place in which his own delusion that he was the Son of God turns true and he becomes ‘the leader,’ the one focusing the reader on the end times, which always draw near and never appear.

The diary (section 4) is framed by Toevs’ own commentary (section 1), a fictional “author’s” commentary (sections 2 and 3), and letters Toevs received from the Soviet Union (sections 5 and 6) when, as an old man he looks back on his adventure from his new home in Aberdeen, Idaho (section 7). The whole is thus structured chiasmically: the first, central, and final sections written by Joseph Toevs; the second, third, fifth and sixth by outsiders, “the author” and former Mennonites in Khiva respectively. Each of the sections are titled after (and according to the order of) one of the seven cities to which John is directed to write in Revelation 2. The observant reader will need little direction in applying the messages of the letters in Revelation to the respective chapters in the novel.

That Wiebe is concerned with the links he is establishing between the novel and history is indicated not only by the seeming necessity of including the subtitle *A Novel* lest his piece as a whole be confused with reality, but also by the introduction of a first person narrator, “the author,” whose father purchased the Toevs diary, who himself translated it before it was stolen, and

who enters into the narrative somewhat too bluntly in sections 2 and 3, and the first paragraph of section 4.

One need not be attuned to postmodernist rhetoric to appreciate the problem of “the author.” Early hearers/readers of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* already knew very well that the I-persona was not identical with Chaucer, nor did they have need of learned articles by Wimsatt and others to avoid the pitfalls of ascribing authorial intention to any particular character or situation in the work. But Chaucer’s narrator, guileless or not, is integrated into the narrative as a whole. Wiebe’s is not. As a late-twentieth-century person he cannot be. He is a flippant sophomore with dangerously small German, less Greek, and an empty mind. He can, one must suppose, transcribe nineteenth-century German *Schrift* (in which the original would have been written) and translate the result, but he tells us that the manuscript has come to him in a mutilated fashion and yet gives no indication of where the mutilations occur (92-93). He lost the original, offered a fifty dollar reward for its return, but expects a \$500 fee for a full bibliography to his final work. He’s full of himself, and thinks he’s a comic genius, a learned scholar, and a complex theological mind. He misconstrues the adjectives “gracious” and “wonderful” in the lengthy Toevs title for his diary, drops commonplace French into the text to prove himself intelligent, and leaps from colloquialism to pedantry in a single sentence: “Wonderful,’ you got to accept, even though adjectives are usually adipose.” (See 42-45 passim.)

But what can one expect other than this? Wiebe’s “author” is after all the paragon of our day, the archetypical postmodern into whose hands have fallen mutilated leaves from the past. And what can he do to introduce them to his fellows? Glibly offer a childish play for an epigram. He invents an author on the first page, a P. S. Seiltanzer, and offers the words of this Nietzschean tightrope-walker as a postscript at the beginning: “We are obsessed with the end of things,” the end of an age, the end of history, the end of this millennium in much the same way as Claass Epp was. And then a second epigram—its source, according to our author, is unknown—tells us “We shall be changed [in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye]. But into what?”

*Our Asian Journey* offers some answers to the question and some hope: “the author” stands after history; he has received it and is thus post-historical, but he has at least enough sense after the first one hundred pages to hold his

tongue and let the historical narrators take charge. Perhaps he is simply attending to their voices for the last three hundred and fifty. At least we hear of him no more. And perhaps he will learn with Toevs at the close of his life “that worthy is the lamb that was slain, . . . worthy the king of kings and Lord of hosts, . . . worthy the holy spirit, . . . worthy our [deserted] leader and [misunderstood friend] Gerhardt, . . . worthy Jantzen’s goats, . . . my dog Sergeant, . . . [and we] poor, Bible-haunted Mennonites” (449).

PETER C. ERB, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON.

Daniel R. Finn. *Just Trading: On the Ethics and Economics of International Trade*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

In Book IV of *The Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith wrote, “I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good.” These words capture Smith’s view that a country is better off when trade between countries is allowed to proceed without government interference. Yet, in light of increasing environmental damage, vanishing rural communities, and declining job opportunities, Smith’s words ring hollow for many Christians. Indeed, international trade is often cited as a contributing factor to these problems. Daniel Finn addresses this dilemma by asking what position Christians should take toward ever-increasing international trade in today’s world.

Finn employs both theological and economic analysis in discussing the morality of international trade. He begins by summarizing the basic arguments for and against increased international trade (he is careful to avoid the term “free trade” since all trade, both domestic and international, occurs in the context of market regulations and is never really “free”). He places these arguments in their proper historical context and discusses how various subtleties have evolved over time. He then identifies important “background commitments” that everyone carries when considering the merits of international trade. For example, prior commitments either to environmental preservation or to the free will of individuals will likely impact a person’s perspective on international trade. Finn discusses these background



commitments within a Christian context. He should be commended for recognizing God's special concern for the poor and disadvantaged in all societies.

What makes this study rewarding is the author's discussion of social problems and the role of international trade. He identifies three issues often used to justify trade restrictions: 1) the decline of rural communities in North America; 2) environmental deterioration; and 3) the loss of quality jobs in North America. He understands that all three problems are real and have painful consequences for the people involved, but he concludes that international trade is neither the primary cause of these problems nor necessarily even a contributor. He also shows that where practical and effective solutions to such problems exist, they often have little to do with restricting trade. Regarding environmental deterioration, he explains the economic logic behind policy proposals such as emissions taxes. Alternatively, if increased trade restrictions are employed to reduce pollution, developing countries will experience income decreases and will thus find it difficult to bear the costs of pollution abating equipment.

However, Finn is not an advocate for the status quo. He argues that the current scheme is plagued by inadequate representation by developing countries on international trade agencies such as the World Trade Organization. Broader representation by these countries would lead to decreased agricultural protection in developed countries and increased agricultural exports in the developing world. The resulting increase in export earnings would help to alleviate the international debt burdens of many developing countries. The difficult question is whether Christian farmers in North America and Europe would accept reduced protection in order to help their brothers and sisters in the developing world.

A particular strength of this book is its appeal to non-economists and non-theologians alike. Nonetheless, Finn is occasionally guilty of relying on the language of the economist, although he does try to avoid it. He also discusses international trade evidence in the Bible. Although it is helpful to learn that little direct guidance can be gained from these passages, Finn devotes too much space to them. Despite such minor weaknesses, this book is a seminal contribution and is possibly the first discussion of international

trade that adequately synthesizes sound economic principles with a Christian concern for biblically-based justice and morality.

Finn recognizes that there are strong elements of truth in the words of Adam Smith. He is also keenly aware that relying on those words alone is morally inadequate. Most important, Finn teaches us that international trade is neither the savior nor the demon of modern society.

CHRIS D. GINGRICH, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA.

Michel Desjardins. *Peace, Violence and the New Testament* (The Biblical Seminar 46). Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Michel Desjardins writes on peace, violence, and the New Testament twenty-five years after he first encountered this vexing topic in university studies. He observes that while scholars and general readers extol the NT's peace-making ethos, they rarely note or discuss its violence-promoting aspects.

Desjardins devotes a lengthy chapter to the peace-promoting face of the NT, helpfully showing the many levels and foci in which peace emphases permeate it. These include Jesus' life and teachings (in all four gospels), the Pauline corpus, and the life of Simon Peter—all as part of the "founding fathers" tradition; the second generation of Christian leaders, in which the pastoral letters are considered; and exhortations to all Christians, in which various NT writers are cited. He offers considerable analysis of the Sermon on the Mount and its peace-promoting emphases. He also discusses the parables in a lengthy section, and continues with a section on "the imminent demise of the world." In addition he reviews Paul's ethic of peace, which is oriented to the new "in Christ" reality that collapses walls of division and provides new perspectives on sexuality. Desjardins rightly concludes that the NT "message of peace is distributed widely."

While Desjardins' presentation is extensive, it fails to provide a christological foundation for peace-making (as in Rom. 5:1-10 and Eph. 2:14-17). It also overestimates the importance of "end-time expectations" to the peace-making ethic (e.g., Matt. 5:9, 45 are not grounded in an eschatological warrant, but in divine character).

Desjardins follows the same approach for exposing the NT's violence-promoting face. His analysis includes an examination of vocabulary, an overview of violent exhortations and actions, the non-pacifist stance of many scriptures, and the apocalyptic worldview. He follows these sections with one on the role of women and the insider-outsider mentality. In these especially he observes that, while there are significant breakthroughs toward a love ethic, there are still many violence-promoting exhortations and stances (especially the view of the Jews in the gospels). He concludes that "Violence abounds within the New Testament"(108).

In a final chapter Desjardins reduces the hermeneutical dilemma to two options: the two views are either consistent or inconsistent. He argues for the latter, quoting at the end a gnostic text from *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, with which he also began the book, to tantalize us with the yin-yang relationship of denial and confession, truth and lie, ignorance and knowledge.

Desjardins' descriptive narration of the many topics and ethical admonitions, or passing references, that constitute the peace-promoting and violence-promoting faces of the NT is important and helpful. For readers oriented to the scholarly studies of war and peace in the NT, however, there is little new.

Desjardins makes two strategic decisions in his opening chapter on method that produce both controversial and deficient elements in his work. First, he expands the definition of violence from "overt physical destructive" acts to cover acts that include, reflecting current psychological agenda, anything that "'violates the personhood of another in ways that are psychologically destructive . . .'" (12). He acknowledges that what is to be included in this more subjective category will vary in people's judgments. Second, he intends to present an academic study but not to provide a "historical-critical" reading of these texts . . ." (14). Occasionally, he nonetheless utilizes some aspects of historical-critical analysis, as on pages 58, 66, 116.

By putting these two strategies together, Desjardins tacitly chooses not to compare the NT's peace-ethics and violence-ethics with those of the NT's contemporary world (as did Klaus Wengst, at least partially, in his *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*). Rather he compares the NT texts with the "enlightened" ideals of twentieth-century ethical rhetoric (not the

actual practices). Desjardins observes that many of the NT violence-producing images are in passing descriptive references, to armies, soldiers, etc., and that the peace-promoting aspects are in explicit ethical admonitions, quite consistently so. But he fails to observe the significance of this in his final hermeneutical arbitration of the two faces.

In bracketing out the historical-critical task, Desjardins overlooks the need to analyze his data by some hermeneutical grid, e.g., whether the data is to be authorized as moral imperative for believers (cf. R. B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*) or simply part of the scenery of the contemporary world in which the NT was written.

Another thorny issue that Desjardins passes over too quickly in his analysis of violent “images of God” is whether Christian ethics is to be in all aspects symmetrically or asymmetrically related to God’s nature and actions. What is the role of God as judge, whose acts of punishment against sin and evil are described with violent imagery? How is this reality evaluated theologically and practically? In the NT, God’s judgment of evil is the standard rationale for why we humans are not to retaliate. This point, as well as the christological basis for ethics, Desjardins fails to assess.

For these reasons Desjardins’s contribution is not a theological analysis of war and violence in the New Testament, but a helpful description of textual content that needs to be assessed in a theological and hermeneutical analysis. Numerous recent sources on the study of peace and war/violence in Scripture were not considered; these could have helped to move his treatment to a more profound level theologically.

Nevertheless, I recommend this book as a provocation to discuss one of the most pertinent issues of ethical reflection for our modern world. Certainly, Jesus and the New Testament count much in this discussion, and it is a hermeneutical challenge to draw the lines between the text and our world in such a way that we are freed from the violence we deplore. To do this we need to attend to “spiritual warfare” in the NT, a topic slighted in this volume, despite reference to it several times.

WILLARD M. SWARTLEY, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary,  
Elkhart, IN