The Conrad Grebel Review

Volume 19, Number 3
Fall 2001

Special Issue
Theologies of Service

Foreword 3

Articles

Women Doing Theology: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology of Service

Sunrise, Sunset: Women Serving
Mary T. Malone 5

Singing a Subversive Song of Hope
Lydia Neufeld Harder 13

Living out Hope from a Place of Exclusion: Service Rooted in Solidarity
Alix Lozano 33

In the Belly of a Paradox: Reflections on the Dubious Service of Reflecting on Service
Gerald W. Schlabach 41

Living Rightly in the Land: Reflection on MCC Service in a Postmodern Era
Judy Zimmerman Herr and Robert Herr 54

Literary Refractions

Introduction
Hildi Froese Tiessen 77

Dreamsongs for Eden
Di Brandt 79

Responses

Response to Gordon Kaufman
Duane K. Friesen 89

Book Reviews

Lydia Neufeld Harder, *Obedience, Suspicion and the Gospel of Mark: A Mennonite-Feminist Exploration of Biblical Authority*
Reviewed by Eleanor Epp-Stobbe 95
Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity: The First Thousand Years*
Reviewed by Lucille Marr 97
Willard M. Swartley, ed., *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*
Reviewed by Michel Desjardins 99
Waldemar Janzen, *Exodus. Believers Church Bible Commentary*
Reviewed by Wes Bergen 101
Mary Swartley and Rhoda Keener, eds., *She Has Done a Good Thing: Mennonite women leaders tell their stories*
Reviewed by Carol Penner 103
Phyllis Pellman Good, *Amish Children*
Reviewed by Paul Tiessen 105

Foreword

The image of a “cup of cold water” is often used as a metaphor for acts of service or relief. The two cups of water held by Saleha Begum in the cover photo also suggest a dual act: she might be either giving or receiving that cup of cold water with both hands. Or, she might be offering one cup and receiving the other. That acts of service should carry some ambiguity about who receives and who gives, or that service in its ideal form is an engagement of equals, is suggested by several articles in this theme issue on “Theologies of Service.”

The first three articles were given as oral presentations at a May 2001 Women Doing Theology conference on the theme, *Embracing Hope: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology of Service*. The three authors, writing from different vantage points, offer varying perspectives on women and service. Mary T. Malone, who has explored the history of women in the early Christian church, argues that women’s service was considered as ‘natural’ as the rising and setting of the sun. Yet throughout history, there were women who did not accept definitions of female inferiority and who took service outside the hidden and private realm to engage in ‘charismatic moments of eschatological maximalism’.

Lydia Neufeld Harder, a Mennonite feminist theologian and biblical scholar, suggests that new images of service – a subversive song of hope – are required that move away from models of service as self-denying, as “giving away of one’s self.” Such models are troubling especially for women for whom service has come to mean “subservience and submission or else duty and guilt.” Harder examines those biblical texts that have been used to justify relationships of dominance and exclusion in acts of service and offers a re-reading of scripture that introduces equality and mutual love into those relationships. Alix Lozano, a theologian who directs the Mennonite seminary in Colombia, writes from a societal context where multi-dimensional violence, poverty, and marginalization offer particular challenges to those struggling to live out service inclusively. She observes that the biblical ‘Jubilee’ is providing Christians in Colombia with a movement of “hope, struggle and popular utopia” against the current anti-jubilary (dis)order.

Two papers that were not part of the above conference fit well into this issue as they address other aspects of the overall theme. Mennonites spend a great deal of time *doing* service, but put considerably less effort into theorizing about it. Gerald W. Schlabach, a practitioner and theologian, found himself in "the belly of a paradox" as he reflected on his own service-work for Mennonite Central Committee alongside his compulsion to write about service theologically. Judy Zimmerman Herr and Robert Herr also balance praxis with theory in their examination of the relief and service mandate of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Using a postmodern framework, they suggest that the work of MCC must find particular narratives or stories within specific contexts, yet motivated by a more explicit 'Mennonite social teaching'. The authors then summarize the implications for MCC's current program. We hope to carry an overall response to these various 'theologies' of service in the next issue of *CGR*.

Mennonites have overwhelmingly thought of service in terms of acts towards and with other people. Attitudes and acts in regard to the natural world and the environment have figured much less prominently in models of service, if at all. While not intentionally included as a 'theology of service', Di Brandt's poem sequence, "Dreamsongs for Eden" are a fitting link that may prompt readers to stretch their imaginations on this issue's theme.

In the Responses section, we atypically include a response to a book review that appeared in the previous *CGR*. Recent books by two of the main contributors to this issue – Malone and Harder – are reviewed in the book review section, along with an eclectic assortment of others. As well, with this issue, I welcome Carol Lichti to the *The Conrad Grebel Review* team as circulation and office manager.

Marlene Epp, *Editor*

Cover photo: Mennonite Central Committee photo by Anita Fieguth

Sunrise, Sunset: Women Serving

Mary T. Malone

In many ways, the service of women has been part and parcel of all my research over the past several decades. I now realize, though, that I have tended to focus on the unexpected, and relatively rare, examples of the leadership of women in a variety of ecclesiastical patriarchal settings rather than on the ubiquitous examples of women's Christian service. The request to explore the service of women throughout Christian history has redirected my focus a little and inevitably has raised new questions.

The constant and virtually unanswerable question I have has to do with women's own sense of their call to service. There is so little evidence from women themselves – their voices have been lost, silenced, distorted, and more than likely never heard at any stage of Christian history. What little evidence we do have from women themselves comes from the writings of women mystics, both inside and outside convent structures. These remarkable women were intent on forging for themselves a path to union with the God who was the love of their lives. This path followed the time-honored and three-fold way of initial purgation from all that might impede such union; illumination, which was a kind of divinely initiated education of the mind and heart; and finally a union with the divine, which was usually expressed in profound lyrical language. What distinguishes the male and female mystics at the end-point is that, almost without exception, the male mystics are drawn further away from the world in a kind of mystical isolation, while the female mystics seem to be

---

Mary T. Malone has been living in delightful retirement in her former home in Ireland since 1998, after thirty-four years of teaching in Canada, most recently at St. Jerome's University in Waterloo, Ontario. She is now working on Volume 3 of Women and Christianity*, and is daily conscious of the debt she owes former colleagues, but most especially former students*. Volume 1 *of* Women in Christianity: The First Thousand Years, *was published in 2000, and* Volume 2, The Medieval Period*, is forthcoming in November 2001 (Novalis Press in Canada, Orbis Press in the United States).*

propelled into the world to live out the compassion that was always central to their experience of God. This mystical momentum led to the public ecclesial ministry of extraordinary women such as Catherine of Siena, Magdelena Beutler, Jane Lead, and so many others. This is not the place, however, to pursue in detail these exceptional lives of service, except to reiterate the point that the lives of all such women known to us were consumed by the desire to share with everyone the profound compassion that they had discovered at the heart of God.

What of all the other women? We know nothing from their own lips, but we have volumes from the pens of male ecclesiastical writers from all the Christian traditions. While this writing does not tell us how the women perceived their own lives, it does illuminate the constant and continually reiterated teaching of Christianity about women's place in, and service to, the community. There is a uniformity to this teaching both before and after the Reformation period that reveals, often in the strongest language, the Christian churches' expectation of their women members. These expectations can be summed up under two headings: (1) "undoing the works of the female," and (2) "charismatic moments of eschatological maximalism."

Undoing the Works of the Female

There is no need to repeat here the account of the ministry of Jesus and his offer of co-equal discipleship to all. As the early church developed in the first few decades, women and men together shared the ministries of disciple, apostle, house-church leader, prophet, preacher, mission, and *diakonia*, or appointed service to the community. As evidenced in 1 Cor. 14, however, there is a constant effort from the mid-fifties of the first century on to silence women in the churches, and to remove their service from the public to the private sphere. For the next two hundred years, a huge debate took place within Christianity about the ministerial role of women. This debate has only recently become known to us again through the work of feminist biblical scholars in particular, but for centuries these often vociferous discussions had been removed from the historical record. The original message – and example – of Jesus about co-discipleship was modified, so that the burden of loving service was placed primarily on the shoulders of the weakest members of the community, namely women, children, and slaves. By the end of the first Christian century, as the writings now known as the Letters to Timothy and those by Peter indicate, a kind of "love patriarchy" was expected to prevail, where wives, children and slaves were instructed to love and obey even harsh masters and husbands, and to do this as their divinely mandated Christian service. After this, the demand to love is rarely made to Christian husbands and slave-owners, and compassionate loving-service is seen to be a peculiar requirement of women. Ironically, such love was also viewed as a sign of the weakness of women, because of their descent from Eve and their sisterly kinship with her.

From now on, the word "shameful" is most frequently heard as a description of women. It is "shameful" for a woman to speak, to appear in public, or to attempt any role outside of the secluded world of the home. What is "shameful" about women is their very nature in its femaleness. Women, in their femaleness, are part of the "lower" world of nature. What is expected of their femaleness is the same as what is expected from nature, namely to act as their nature designates. Women can enter the world of the "spirit" through obedience, suffering, love of their masters, and silence. If this natural work of women is ennobled by being done "in the Lord," then the "works of the female" will be destroyed and women can participate with men in the higher realms of Christianity.

Women, then, were accounted to be part of nature, and nature, under the guidance of God, its creator, had decreed their task. No account was to be taken of women's natural service. This service did not become part of the story of the community. Just as historians did not write about the daily rising and setting of the sun – this was part of nature, and expected – so historians did not write about the sunrise to sunset service of women. In their daily toil women were not doing anything special. They were simply following their natures and performing their allotted tasks. In a Christian context such work was never accounted as ministry. In following their divinely allotted natures, women were engaged in the task of subduing the female, that ever-dangerous and threatening womanly attribute which had no part whatever in the divine. The female and the divine were entirely antithetical. In the middle ages it was suggested that the female was at war with the divine for the souls of men, and this fear reached such a crescendo in the early modern period that the witch-craze resulted. For one thing was sure: no matter how hard women struggled, the female would never be conquered.

The service of women, then, existed in a kind of negative zone, where sin prevailed in the very fact of being female. When femaleness was subdued and overlaid by a layer of what we have come to call "femininity," women could experience some likeness with God in the feminine dimensions that could be attributed to "Him." The essence of God, however, was seen to be far removed from femaleness, especially from what one might call the "ooziness" of the experience of being female.

There is no doubt whatever that women have been working from sunrise to sunset throughout Christian history. This work was seen to be part of the God-assigned task of women, was part of their nature, and excited no comment, except that the more laborious it was, the better it fulfilled God's will. Such work only excited comment when it ceased, just as an eclipse of the sun or a change in some other natural phenomenon might arouse comment. Laborious women's work kept the female at bay, and in fact has kept both world and church afloat for millennia.

Charismatic Moments of Eschatological Maximalism

Christian history is littered with moments when women resisted this supposedly God-given agenda and moved into a kind of "end-time" behavior, where they lived a full-blown, all-or-nothing maximalist Christian life. When it came to women's Christian vocation to service, there was no room for half-measures. Women had to cross the great divide between femaleness and Christian ministry, and no greater chasm existed in the Christian imagination. Of course, we now know that the life of Christian discipleship is expected of all believers and that co-equal discipleship, far from being a charismatic exception, is the Christian norm. Throughout history, however, such women were seen as boundary transgressors, and as being propelled forward from private to public life by powerful spirit-filled impulses. This behavior was "unnatural" and the women needed powerful divine support in order to accomplish their spiritual goals. First and foremost, they had to be profoundly disobedient in their choice of authorities, and the phrase that is so often heard is "we must obey God rather than man."

Here, also, Christian history is very sketchy. Such public Christian service of women was viewed as abnormal and certainly not to be imitated, so there is no continuous historical record. Each generation of Christian women had to re-invent the wheel, so to speak, and each had to recreate the environment and conditions of women's Christian service as if it had never existed before. They were without role models or inspirational precedents. As a result, many such women appeal to the one role model known to them from ancient fables, namely Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons. When the saintly lives of such women are written, they fail to inspire because of the protocols of hagiographical writing. In this tradition the propaganda value of the saint's life is calculated first. Then the women's life is written to fit the required model. It is often only when we possess both official (i.e., male-authored) and unofficial (i.e., female-authored) biographies of the same person that we can begin to see the real personality emerge.

When women felt called by God to a public ministry of any kind in the church, they first of all had to engage in acts of disobedience, defiance, deceit, and transgression of conventional cultural and churchly expectations in order to follow God's call. There was no "normal" channel for them, except at the very beginnings of Christian history and of the various reforming movements throughout that history. Whenever Christians were reconnected with the foundational documents of the tradition, then the common call of discipleship for all was re-discovered. Almost without exception, however, such an enlarged vision survived only a very short time before being re-institutionalized into conventional mode. History does present us with a few routes that were open to women in their pursuit of their Christian vocation, and these will be briefly outlined here.

Martyrdom: This, of course, is the ultimate choice, but one made by an extraordinary number of women throughout every period of Christian history. The personal diary of the early third-century martyr, Perpetua, forever traces both the courage and horror experienced by this twenty-two-year-old mother as well as the profound religious motivation at work in her life.

Virginity: The virgin was seen to make the definitive break with femaleness, and when eventually the life of consecrated virginity gave rise to the long tradition of women's monasticism, Christianity inherited one of the few relatively unbroken histories of women's Christian service. This was a story of women's prayer, women's symbolic religious thought, women's mystical journeys, and women's public service of compassion. It was also – and essentially – a service of mold-breaking in the areas of religious experience, God-talk, church-life, and women's ministry in teaching, preaching, healing, and hospitality. All in all, it offered a completely new religious re-interpretation of femaleness. The women were conscious of their innovatory task, insisted on naming their work, and resisted all efforts to make them deviate from their God-given goal.

Beguines: The Beguines lasted just a little over a century, and their lives and work were so innovative that their history was practically eliminated in its totality until recent times. The Beguines totally confused their contemporaries in male church leadership. Even today, the records ring with the phrase: "Who are these women?" They fitted none of the conventional categories, not the wife/mother, not the consecrated virgin, not the dependent single woman. These were independent single women who worked to support themselves while at the same time providing education, healing, and hospitality for their communities, and observing chastity for as long as they remained with the group. It was the element of choice that completely befuddled their contemporaries. These women chose when to join and when to leave. Perhaps more than anything else, it was the choice of the vernacular as the medium of spirituality and theology that most scared the official church. These women were intent on democratizing mysticism and theology, precisely at a time when theological thought was being firmly harnessed into its western Latin mode in the universities.

Heretics: With the introduction of the feared Inquisition, the medieval period was not a safe time to harbor unconventional religious thoughts. Nevertheless, we have inherited hundreds of stories of women who braved the wrath of the official church in pursuing their own understandings of Christianity. Almost without exception, this teaching was directed at the narrowness and corruption of the church, and the unimpressive lives of many clergy. The names of Marguerite Portete and Na Prous Boneta, both burnt at the stake, stand out, as well as the awesome tragedy of Joan of Arc, who was publicly pardoned, at her mother's insistence, twenty-five years after her execution.

Ambassadors: Aristocratic wives, in all traditions, and in several cultures have performed without recognition the ambassadorial task for centuries. These women had to move from one culture to another and thus were among the few who could communicate across cultures and languages. Within the church, something similar prevailed in the lives of several women saints. Perhaps the most significant was Catherine of Siena, who traversed the whole of Europe several times on papal ambassadorial business, often for such ungrateful clients as the Florentines.

Mystical writers: It is only in recent times that the work of many women mystical writers is being accorded its creative significance in the history of Christian service. These women were passionate writers, recording their spiritual adventures with exquisite detail and lyrical exuberance. The convents provided them with libraries and scriptoria which they used for the education in prayer of their sisters and the wider community of women. Those outside the convent were not so lucky in their access to resources, nor did they have recourse to the same protection. Nevertheless, all the women writers used their voices to name their own reality and to record their growing self-knowledge as they invaded the divine territory. They created the path as they travelled, having to compose both the language and the metaphors for divine-human relationships as they experienced them. They did not see this writing as elitist but as an invitation to all to participate in what they discovered to be the journey toward identity with the God with whom “they were before they were.”

Preachers: If the history of Christianity reveals anything about the service of women, it is that preaching seems to be the natural arena for women. In every age, with every reform, with each return to the sources, women seem to take up preaching as their natural right and gift. But with equal frequency this gift is denied them as soon as the clerical establishment can organize resistance. Whether one looks at the medieval period or the sixteenth-century reformations, women turn to preaching with delight and fervor. When challenged about their right to preach, they usually proffer Mary Magdalen as their model and inspiration. It was she who was the first Christian preacher, sent personally by her risen Savior. Despite the power and scriptural veracity of this model, the churches universally denied preaching to women for centuries, and many still continue to do so.

The service of women, then, has to be ferreted out of the existing records, and the male-authored histories don’t easily give up their hidden treasures. There was no normally accepted and recognized service of women, except the culturally decreed inferior and hidden private service that was deemed to result from the natural inferiority of women. Christianity added the religious gloss of obedience, silence, and atonement for sin to this service, and millions of women through the ages internalized this teaching and literally made the world of daily living possible. Every now and then, however, women who could not accept this definition of themselves, their lives, and their relationship with God emerged and transgressed the prescribed boundaries. Such women engaged in charismatic moments of eschatological maximalism and pushed the Christian envelope to its outer limits. They created for the succeeding generations a completely new paradigm of womanly identity, which is as yet nameless in its innovatory potential. All of us are living into this identity, creating the path as we walk.

Singing a Subversive Song of Hope

Lydia Neufeld Harder

Introduction

The overall title for these conference presentations intrigued me: *Embracing Hope. Envisioning an Inclusive Theology of Service*. I immediately noted the way it "embraces" both feminist theology and Mennonite tradition. After all, inclusivity has become a code word for feminist theological convictions, an ethos of that community of dialogue. At the same time, no Mennonite will likely question my statement that "service" is still a politically correct term in Mennonite circles. But the title also hints that there is a certain discomfort when inclusivity and service are put into the same sentence. Inclusive service is not yet a reality in either feminist or Mennonite circles. Thus these conversations among women who feel caught between opposite convictions are intended to create a new vision and theology of service. Perhaps this dialogue may yet lead to a song of hope and joy.

Two overarching methodological moves frame this paper. Part I is a critical analysis of the experience of service. New aspects of service are visible if those who serve step back for a moment from the immediacy of their experience in order to ask questions about what is really happening in those interactions. My observations come primarily from my own experience from within the Mennonite church. Thus when I use the term "we" I am referring to Mennonite women. However, all women and men are invited to reflect on their experience of service.

This analysis can open us to a second methodological move, a re-examination of the theology that supports our notions of service. Mennonite theology has primarily been based on biblical texts heard over and over again in the preaching and teaching within our churches. Many Mennonite women,

---

Lydia Neufeld Harder is adjunct faculty at Conrad Grebel University College and teaches at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

however, feel alienated from this theology. For example, they struggle with theological notions such as understanding service as a "giving away of one's self," holding up martyrdom as the ideal of service, and evaluating any admission of one's own needs as selfish. The discussion at this "Women Doing Theology" conference confirmed this alienation. In Part II of this paper, we will reread key biblical texts with eyes more aware of the complexities of the notion of service in order to begin the process of rethinking our theology.

The title of my presentation, "Singing a Subversive Song of Hope," uses the imagery of music to help us envision service in a different key. Music includes both consonant and dissonant chords. When we place our experience and the biblical text side by side, we can hear the dissonant chords most clearly. Sometimes we wonder if the song that is produced can ever become harmonious again. Yet I believe it is in paying attention to the tension and discord that we can again hear the voice of God. The discernment of this voice of God must come from an inclusive community that is ready to begin by listening. At first we may hear only songs of domination and servitude. But perhaps, as we listen closely, we will find the familiar pattern of notes and rhythms disrupted. The pattern that has been practiced endlessly will slowly give way to a new rhythm, a different harmonization, or even a new melody line. Though the first notes of our new composition may be sung with hesitation, I hope we will find the courage to sing and dance together, each of us contributing to the whole. The song will be one of hospitality and of freedom, of receiving and giving, of justice and communion because it will be based on the kind of love that God has shown us.

I. An Analysis of the Experience of Service

The term "service" is overused in our society. When I read the daily newspaper, a textbook, or the church bulletin – all of them use "service" as a kind of short-hand for actions and practices assumed to be related to each other by some common core. My dictionary suggests twenty basic meanings, ranging from "work done for a master or superior" to a "branch of the United States Armed Forces." In its ideal meaning, service is something a person does for someone else, thus at least temporarily preferring the other's good to one's own. Sandra Schneiders suggests that service is essentially an act of self-gift, of love in its purest form, since the ultimate preferring of another's good would be giving one's life for another.[1]

Rarely, however, do we experience service as the pure self-gift of another. Other models of service have been created that allow many variations on this theme, yet continue to convey the image of self-giving and caring for the other. Service has become a slippery term, used glibly to sanctify various actions, practices, and institutions. Thus we are confused, often not sure where love for the other and love for ourselves overlap. In addition, the ambiguity of the term allows meanings from one realm of life to contaminate or erode ideal meanings in another realm. For example, how exactly is serving as CEO in a corporation related to serving as a volunteer in a nursing home?

I want to illuminate the complexity of our uses of the term "service" by examining three models present in our society and churches from a simple phenomenological point of view.[2] Underlying all of these is service *as a relationship* between persons or institutions – a relationship that includes elements of power and authority.[3] I will pay particular attention to the boundaries assumed in each model that separate people from each other. This will help us decide whether and how each model is inclusive or exclusive. Of course, "inclusivity" and "exclusivity" have their own problems of definition. Inclusivity can range from mere tolerance to indifference to a hearty welcome of the other. But inclusion and service overlap in their common focus on relationships and their common entanglement with power.

(1) Service arising from a condition of inequality (servitude from "beneath")

In this model the servant must perform a "service" for the other because of some basic right or power which the latter is understood to possess. For example, a child in relation to parents, a slave in relation to a master, a laborer in relation to the boss. In every case the service arises because of a basic condition of inequality, and the service rendered tends to re-inforce this inequality in status. A child washes the dishes because her mother demands it. A woman serves coffee during breakfast because her husband claims such service is his right, a mother on social assistance works as a volunteer because the government forces her to do so in order to receive a basic income. All of these arise out of a structure of assumed rights and duties.

Though the demands may be benevolently intended, the inclination is for exploitation to take over. This is because the one higher in the hierarchy has the freedom to choose what the service will be and how it will be done. In addition, coercion and violence may be used to enforce this service from the one deemed subordinate. Whether overtly or subtly, pressure is put on the one beneath in the social hierarchy to conform to the will of the one above.

In this model the boundaries between people may be part of external institutional structures. More often, however, they are part of an inner class structure we have incorporated into our subconscious mind. Usually external and internal structures re-inforce each other and both persons accept the invisible boundaries that define this class system. A woman assumes her husband has the right to be served his coffee first, the man assumes it is her duty to serve him. Persons of European ancestry assume they have the right to the best hotels, persons of African ancestry assume they will serve in these same hotels. Laws of apartheid or patriarchy are not needed when such class structures are internalized.

In this model exclusion and inclusion are determined by how well people stay within the expected roles, how well they give up making their own choices. All can be included – if they respect the role that is given them. If the poor serve the rich, all can live together in harmony. If the uneducated comply with the will of the educated, there will be no hassle.

Sometimes there is an attempt at making these structures seem more equal by paying the one who serves or by naming the service something else. However, then the inequality is only more subtle and possibly more cruel. I may leave a tip at the restaurant, but I have clearly conceded to an invisible class system in the high-handed way I have addressed the waiter. The boss may name his secretary his “administrative assistant,” but this does not change the possibility that she will be fired if she questions any of his demands. In addition, the remuneration given for her work only underlines the low value placed on her service.

In North America, it is an assumption of equality that makes this kind of service particularly open to exploitation. In our society, equality really means that everyone is equally welcome to compete for the top positions.[4] The competition is however already rigged to exclude those regarded as lower on the social scale. Someone who is disabled is welcome to apply for the higher position, but the demands of the job must be fulfilled in the same way as before. An aboriginal person can apply for any job, but loss of dignity stolen through centuries of abuse, lack of a formal education, and subtle prejudices keep most indigenous people in lower paying jobs. Since the ones on top have the power to determine the norm, exclusion happens.

This model of service breeds competition and power struggles as well as domination and oppression. Those on a lower social scale do all they can to please those higher up, often compromising their own ethical standards so that they can climb up one rung. In this model we compete for status and prestige, not always realizing that even when we succeed, we have only succeeded in becoming an oppressor as well. Most of us will recognize our involvement in this model of service. The crucial question, however, is whether and how this model can be transformed into service that is truly a freely chosen gift of the self to the other.

(2) Service arising because of the need of the other (service from "above")

In this second model, service denotes "what the server does freely for the served because of some need perceived in the latter which the former has the power to meet."[5] This is the service a professional renders to a client, a parent to a child, the rich to the poor, the healthy to the sick. Often the appeals for charity that we hear from the church are built on this assumption. The need is so great! You have the ability to meet this need. Be compassionate! Come and serve!

Doesn't this model realize the ideal of service – the unforced seeking of the other's good? And isn't it built on a notion of equalizing assets? Giving to those who do not have by those who have? At its best, this model does suggest a sharing of resources that can lead to deeper relationships of equality. The choice to serve can be free, because the power to choose is given to the one doing the serving. However, it is within this inequality that the subtle temptation of this model lies. What seems like unselfish service contains the seeds of corruption, because the one who serves can easily seek her own good by "detouring" through service to the other. As a parent, I use my child to satisfy my own intimacy needs, as a pastor I view congregational members as needy sheep because this feeds my ego. We even give away our clothes to the "needy" so that our consciences won't bother us when we get new and better clothes for ourselves. No wonder this kind of service is sometimes rejected or at least resisted.

Domination happens in this model when people are stereotyped or placed in the static roles of either "giver" or "needy." Those being served begin to see themselves as dependent, as helpless victims, not recognizing what resources they do have. Those serving view themselves as magnanimous givers, not admitting their own needs. Being rich or poor, educated or uneducated begins to indicate the kind of value accorded one's personhood, one's status on a social scale, rather than simply the kind of resources one has to share. These temptations are particularly dangerous in cases of chronic need. When dignity is taken away, power-plays based on stereotypes begin to happen. Domination, by the supposedly stronger person, partners with manipulation, by the supposedly weaker person, to destroy any kind of healthy relationship that could develop.

The term "servant leadership" that has recently become popular in management and organizational theory recognizes that most people in this model serve via institutions that facilitate or restrain their service.[6] We serve as elders or pastors in a church, as teachers in a school, or as nurses in a hospital. Our service is dictated by the institution rather than only by the particular needs of someone else. However, here too the institution tends to enlarge the power of the one serving rather than that of the one being served. "Servant leadership," with its focus on the one assumed to have the strength and power to facilitate change, can thus easily mask oppressive strategies. This is possibly why boundaries are much talked about in this model. The misuse of power has created the need for strong guidelines for professional conduct. It is now understood that the lack of choice given to those being served provides opportunities for abuse, including sexual or physical abuse.

Learning self-care is also a popular notion among professional caregivers. Learning to express one's own needs and finding ways to care for oneself is crucial when one's vocation consists primarily of giving to others. Women, who have been socialized to be givers and have also internalized low self-esteem, are particularly prone to put the need of others before their own.[7] However, the notion of self-care can also hide an unwillingness to see the "client" as more than a receiver of service. It can cover up the power of the professional who refuses to draw on the gifts of the larger community, preferring instead to be the hero in the good Samaritan story. Thus, self-care can move into two directions: it can open us to receive as well as give; or it can create barriers to more mutual relationships in our service.

Inclusion in this model is determined by the people serving, since they have the power to determine both what is named as legitimate need and how that need should be met. Thus the church can decide who to serve in the broader community and what kind of service will be provided, while recipients of the service must quietly (and thankfully) accept what is offered. Again, a kind of artificial equality can be created by paying the server for the service, as in that provided by a professional such as a doctor, nurse, or lawyer. However, the basis of this model is still inequality, with the professional in charge of the interaction.

Exclusion happens in this second model when patterns of relationship develop in which some are exclusively named as givers or as self-sufficient while others are named as receivers or needy. This is readily illustrated by our response as a church to people with a different sexual orientation. To a specific need for acceptance and dialogue as expressed by homosexual persons, the church has responded by stereotyping all those who are homosexual as needy of conversion and salvation, implying that the rest of the church is healthy. This allows the church to exclude gays and lesbians from service through the church without looking at the gifts and commitments of individuals. Consider other general terms, such as “handicapped” or even “senior citizen,” that are used to characterize people so that their individuality is lost and thus their individual choices are precluded. The temptation to stop the movement toward equality in the guise of service is real, because being on top has its benefits.

This model of service is probably the most prevalent in both the contemporary church and the larger society. Can it be transformed, so that service can truly be received as an expression of love and caring rather than experienced as dominating power?

(3) A model of solidarity and friendship (service based on equality)

Sandra Schneiders suggests that friendship is the one relationship based on equality. If friends do not begin as equals, they quickly abolish whatever inequality they discover or they make their differences serve mutual goals within the structure of the relationship. In interactions between them, the good of the other is truly the good of oneself. But this self-fulfilment is not the result of a singular pursuit of one's own goals; rather, by receiving love as well as giving it, the happiness of both is assured. Service in this model is freely chosen both by the giver and the receiver. Therefore, it is liberating and freeing. At its best, service between friends affirms equality and promotes mutual dignity, is not demanded and creates no debts, expects no return but freely evokes reciprocity. Perhaps that is why true friendship is so rare and so precious.

Can this third model be extended to persons with whom we cannot naturally share the intimacy we experience within a freely chosen friendship? Can it be extended to institutional relationships? The term "solidarity" is sometimes used to express the kind of relationship we have with another based on the equality and dignity of each person. We stand with another, not above or beneath. Solidarity characterizes the relationship that puts all the gifts of individual persons at the service of the community or institution for the good of each as it is needed. Solidarity describes an interdependence of everyone, where the dignity of each is enhanced, and where coercion and violence are not needed to call anyone to serve.

Service within a relationship of equality cannot easily be institutionalized. Instead, barriers and boundaries are overcome when deliberate moves are made toward equality in status. Many of us have seen how a hierarchical relationship between a so-called boss and his administrative assistant begins to shift when both are involved in setting goals and making decisions that affect both. Even while responsibility is divided so that a diversity of gifts is recognized, the solidarity created can overcome status differences. Even service which might be considered servile and menial can be transformed into a loving action when friendship is at its basis. The seemingly one-sided service given by a loving daughter to her aging mother attests to this fact.

This model is not something that is achieved once and for all; rather, it must become a dynamic force that works itself out in practice. We can recognize solidarity when competition is lessened, co-operation increases, and stereotypes disappear. We see it blossom when decision-making is extended to everyone concerned with an issue. In communities where solidarity reigns, service is dynamic, continually creating new opportunities as gifts are discovered, developed, and used for the good of all.

What about exclusion and inclusion? Because service in the third model is freely given and freely received, it cannot be coerced or forced. Both partners in the relationship must be involved in establishing the mutuality on which solidarity and friendship depend. Thus service here invites and welcomes others. However, the rate of refusal is high, because it is costly to give up seeing oneself in terms of rights, duties, power, or needs. Thus those who do not wish to risk refusal of their gifts, or to accept the dependency inherent in receiving, never experience the gift of true friendship. They are excluded from this model because the cost of interdependency seems too high.

This model of service emerges when relationships between people and institutions are open to dynamic growth and transformation. Hope comes as individual examples create new possibilities for the transformation of institutional structures. There is always the danger that the ensuing conflict and tension will result in a call for a more stable model of service, one that will continue to dominate, oppress, and exclude many while espousing love and goodwill. Yet hope can be sustained when we see the signs of dynamic movement toward mutuality among us.

II. A Rereading of "Service" Texts

It seems to me that many Mennonite women have learned to sing a song of service that affirms subservience and submission or else duty and guilt.[8] This song is made up of a variety of melodies that communicated to us that our service was inadequate and meaningless, that we were not doing nearly enough nor denying ourselves enough. Or alternatively we were doing more than we should, creating dependency or interfering in another person's life.

This song is constructed from a variety of scriptural texts that have been connected to each other to form a complete hymn – a song that, though unsatisfying even to ourselves, we continue to sing for other people. Somehow we have forgotten that we have access to the raw materials, and that we too can contribute to the composition of the hymn we sing. We have forgotten that change need not come about by having an "ideal" song imposed from "above." Instead, each individual can initiate change by changing her own contribution to the song. One new note or different rhythm can disrupt a whole pattern of music. As others in the choir begin to hear the disruptive melody being inserted, as they note a different harmonization or recognize a unique rhythm, they are invited to respond to those changes. Hope for a new song begins with that first small change that is deliberately made. Improvisation by others must then follow, because the music cannot go on as before.

In this section, I want to examine our old patterns of singing and to ask whether a new theology of service can be composed. I will reread key Scripture passages that have formed the pattern of notes we name our song of service, but in the context of our experience of service and in light of the models of service just examined. This step begins the formation of an alternative theology of service by disrupting our usual interpretations. It invites women to continue the process of interpretation by participating in the detailed historical analysis that is needed as well as in the ongoing hermeneutical process and conversation. As we do this we may be able to recognize the patterns that don't fit, or to discover new notes that should be included even when they at first sound dissonant. Perhaps we can yet compose a song that welcomes others into a choir of spontaneity and joy.

(1) Masters and slaves, husbands and wives, fathers and children, leaders and followers: Singing a subversive note in relationships of service "from beneath"

> Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. . . . Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ: not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free. And masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven and with him there is no partiality.(Excerpts from Eph.5-6)[9]

> But you are not to be called Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father – the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. . . .But woe to you, blind guides . . . hypocrites! (Excerpts from Matt. 23)

> "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you". . . . Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord. . . . My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant . . . for the Mighty One has done great things for me. . . ."(Excerpts from Luke 1-3)

Usually the words "be subject," "obey," and "service" jump out at us as we read the passage from Ephesians. We have often read those verses assuming that the writer is speaking primarily to the ones "beneath," telling them to obey and serve. Probably no passages have been used more often to ensure servanthood than this passage from Ephesians and parallel passages in Colossians and 1 Peter, often called the "Household Codes." Clearly, these imperatives fall into the "servitude model" since they assume a hierarchy where service happens from beneath, service in which women obey husbands, children obey parents, and servants obey masters. Throughout church history, those above have used these household codes to ensure service by those below. And that was easy to do, since the hierarchical pattern of relationships was assumed to be blessed by God, who took the highest place on this ladder.

Yet a more careful reading of the passage uncovers a subversive note that begins to disrupt the all-pervasive tone of servitude.[10] The assumption of ultimate loyalty to the one above is questioned. The passage suggests there is only one master whom you need to reverence and obey – that is God, shown in Christ Jesus. By implication this means that other so-called masters do not make the final evaluation of service you render. Though God is clearly understood as above humans in the divine/human relationship, this does not imply a God who demands service because it is his right. Instead, service is to a God who came to us in Christ, the very self-gift of God. This God shows no partiality to any one class of humans. Both masters and slaves, both women and men must answer to God directly. Therefore, the phrase “be subject to one another” also begins to subvert the competition associated with the first model outlined in part I. Climbing to the top by trying to please the one above does not yet solve the problem of servitude.

However, is this enough? Has the writer understood the essence of service? Is he only *describing* the usual social hierarchy or is he *justifying* it? Is his relocation of ultimate loyalty strong enough to create a shift in these institutional relationships, especially if God is also seen as a Lord and Master whom one must obey without question?

The passage from Matthew is taken from one of the most angry, scathing speeches of Jesus. Over and over, he lashes out at the leaders, the Pharisees, who place burdens on people while they themselves seek honor and privilege. So angry is Jesus that he suggests that naming someone “boss” (whether a rabbi, a father, or an instructor) creates a situation in which that boss can rule over you. Instead, Jesus insists that only God is your master. Under God’s reign all are students, all are children. Moreover, under God’s reign the usual hierarchy will be turned upside down; the one on top will serve, the one at the bottom will be honored.

This passage disrupts the dominant social hierarchy much more radically than the Ephesians passage but does it with similar logic. Only God is above you, therefore you are equal. This implies that the usual categories of status and privilege no longer apply. Woe to those who insist that privilege based on status still applies when God is the ruler! Woe to those who are blind, who do not see the new, social/political situation that God is bringing! Woe to leaders who build their status in order that others should serve! But even more than that, this text assures the ones serving that, in the final analysis, the last shall be first and the first last. Insiders shall become outsiders; outsiders, insiders. In the longer view of Christ’s eschatological reign, justice will prevail. And because we can begin to envision this new reality we can live without earthly masters. Is this enough to inject hope in those who live in servitude?

The third passage is a personal testimony of the joy that comes with true servanthood of God. According to Luke, Mary is overjoyed to be counted among the Servants of God, those to whom God has revealed Godself in a special way, those who have been chosen and empowered to serve God. Just as the kings and prophets were called servants of God – she too would receive the power to do the task God had called her to. I believe her acceptance of the invitation to become the mother of Jesus was not coerced or forced. Instead, the Magnificat testifies to God's role in overthrowing the usual hierarchical relationships. Somehow she has experienced that in her calling to be the mother of Jesus.

As I reread these passages, I felt a sense of despair that throughout history, the Mennonite church has not listened to the subversion begun in them. Instead, the church has often used these verses to support the social patterns of a dominant culture by appealing to the Lordship of God. Leaders have insisted that menial service is for those at the bottom of the social scale, that sacrifice and the way of the cross are for those already serving from beneath. Service to God has been interpreted as part of this hierarchical pattern: God as the great "boss" in the sky insists on our service because it is his right to do so. Is this because masters were in control of the interpretation? Is it because it has been too difficult for slaves to live according to an inner freedom? Is it because personal autonomy can be reached only if status is bestowed by other humans? In any case, it seems that the revolutionary notion that only God the Creator is beyond us, that Christ is Lord, has not yet upset the hierarchies of servitude in the church.[11]

Perhaps a change of masters is not enough if we continue to serve "from beneath" with God on top of a domineering hierarchy. However, a subversive note sung by those considered weak can still be powerful enough to change the way God is described in the song. If those in servitude begin to sing this new description of God loudly even for themselves, they will begin to subvert the whole song. We know of the power of the songs of slaves who succeeded in moving toward external freedom by first claiming their own inner freedom and God's promise of the upside down kingdom. Giving our loyalty to God can relativize all other claims to superiority, beginning a larger song of liberation.

(2) Rich and poor, strong and weak, adults and children, healthy and sick: Singing a subversive note in relationships of service "from above"

> "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. . . . Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me. . . . John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. . . . For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. . . You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to give his life a ransom for many." (Excerpts from Mark 8-10)
>
> Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it when we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Excerpt from Matt. 25)
>
> But wanting to justify himself, [the lawyer] asked Jesus, "But who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, and went away leaving him half dead. . . a priest passed by. . . a Levite

> passed by. . . . But a Samaritan while traveling, came near him and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds. (Excerpt from Luke 10)

I was surprised at how differently I read this set of passages when I realized which model of service they assumed. If read in terms of the first model, by those who have little choice and are already at the bottom of the social scale, terms like "deny yourself," "take up your cross," "become a slave and servant" enforce servitude and suffering and justify domination and oppression. However, as I reread the verses in their larger literary context, I realized that these words are not addressed to those at the bottom of the social scale. The texts in Mark and Matthew are addressed to an inner circle of followers, particularly to the leadership group of twelve disciples, who had been empowered to heal and teach. The passage in Luke is addressed to a lawyer, someone with high status within his community. These words are spoken to leaders, and they address the temptations of those who would help the so-called "needy." The model assumed is service "from above." The passages in Mark are particularly interesting because small, seemingly insignificant incidents are placed side by side with comments by Jesus, that help us see the impact of those incidents. The disciples argue about who is the greatest, they send away children who wish to be blessed by Jesus, they are jealous of others who are also healing in the name of Jesus, they ask to have the highest places in glory. Jesus responds in a number of ways that subvert this view of service.

First of all, Jesus suggests that the kind of service he calls for can only be done through a denial of one's own selfish goals, such as gaining crowns in the kingdom or climbing higher on the social scale. Secondly, Jesus renames the "needy ones" as first in the kingdom. Welcoming a child is like welcoming their master, Jesus. Feeding the hungry or visiting those in prison is like doing this for a king. He also renames those doing the serving. They are not the ones usually named the servants of God, the Priests or Levites. Instead, they are the outsiders, the Samaritans, who recognize the neighbor in the wounded person from Judea. Stereotyping persons as "needy" or "givers" is rejected. Third, Jesus suggests that givers must also be receivers. I had always thought that the motto "in the name of Christ" came from a Scripture passage suggesting how followers of Christ were to give. Here Jesus turns this saying around and suggests that whoever gives a cup of cold water to us – to the ones who bear the name of Christ, to the disciples – will not lose a reward. Here the disciples are the receivers who should respect the givers. Finally, Jesus addresses the temptation to control the service, to keep power within one's own circle, to exclude others from ministry by suggesting that we become as slaves. Be willing to *serve* in menial ways. He thus turns the values of leaders upside down, and asks them to truly serve others according to their need instead of only according to what the leaders wish to give.

Thus in a variety of ways, Jesus unmasks the face of service "from above," allowing us to see the power abuse that is possible in a ministry to those who have less. So, why have these verses so often been used to enforce servitude, rather than to unmask power moves? Maybe we need a different term which will not so easily hide the power dynamics involved in this kind of "service from above."

Does it make a difference if we understand these words as addressed *only* to those who serve because they have received much? Does it make a difference if we name the power they have to choose and make decisions about who is needy and whether they will meet that need? Will anything change if we reject the stereotyping that often accompanies this kind of giving? Can these stories be subversive enough so that those who have the power to exclude others from service or from being served will see themselves and their own need? Will it make any difference if the particular temptations that leaders have to misuse power, under the guise of altruism, are named? Perhaps I am most skeptical that this model can be changed because I can identify with it most readily. I know how difficult it is to be transformed at the core of our being so that the resources and power we have can be truly shared. However, I also know that a compassionate sharing of resources can begin to shift systems of oppression and domination.

Possibly the most subversive note that can be sung by those who serve from above is giving up the right to define the need of the other. Instead, true vulnerability comes when resources and need are named through conversation and dialogue in which both the one serving and the one in need can participate. This is a radical notion. Can you imagine the rich and poor together going through our closets to see which clothes should be shared? A song of mutuality can grow when room is given for this conversation. Melodies of service that truly meet the need of the other can then be composed. Perhaps solidarity can come from this kind of compassionate and vulnerable service.

(3) Perfume and hair, basin and towel: symbols of mutual service within relationships of equal status

> Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. . . . Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, . . . said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor? (Excerpt from John 12)
>
> He [Jesus] poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet? . . . You will never wash my feet." (Excerpt from John 13)
>
> This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. . . . I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from the Father. (Excerpt from John 15)

The basin and towel have long been important symbols of service for Mennonites. These symbols have been used to suggest that we "let go of pride and worldly power" and that we "take on the role of servant" and "humbly" wash each other's feet as Jesus has done.[12] These symbols have been powerful for me as well, though with a slight difference in interpretation. Nine years ago at the first "Women Doing Theology" conference, I suggested there were actually two foot washings in the gospel of John.[13] The first occurs when Mary washes Jesus' feet with perfume and dries it with her hair. The second occurs when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and dries them with a towel. It may be helpful to look again at these stories in terms of the models of service that we have outlined.

The best clue to the model that underlies these stories arises from the objections to the foot washings in each story. In the first one, Judas objects because Mary should have given the money to the poor. In other words, Mary is seen as a benefactor of the poor, as someone who normally serves from above. We know from the gospel of Luke that rich women gave of their resources to the disciple community around Jesus. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus seem to be from this group of benefactors – a comfortable arrangement for Judas who kept the books. But here Mary disrupts the comfortable social scale. She has recognized Jesus' need for love during this dangerous time in Jerusalem. She takes the perfume and washes Jesus feet, suggesting that this leader can also be needy. Even more daringly, with her intimate action Mary boldly enters the inner circle of disciples. Hierarchical boundaries between men and women are freely crossed. Though female, she claims her place as a disciple right beside Jesus. Mary serves from a place of equality, ignoring the status that others want to give her. And Jesus responds by receiving this love as it is given.

In the second story, just a chapter later and also at a supper, Jesus pours water in a basin and begins to wash his disciples' feet. Again there is a strong objection. Again it is a male disciple who objects. This time, Peter vigorously objects to the foot washing. To understand why, recall the customs of the time. Slaves usually brought in the basins and water, and the guests would wash their own feet. However, sometimes one person would voluntarily wash the feet of someone else, for example, a beloved rabbi, as a sign of deep love and respect. Again this was in intimate action, one reserved for close friends. Why did Peter object to this foot washing? Was it really because he did not want to do the same? Or was it because he had put Jesus on a false hierarchical pedestal, and was uncomfortable with the shift in an established social pattern that Jesus was suggesting? Peter has a model of relationships where there is a clear "above" and "below," each with clearly defined roles. Clearly, Jesus is above and Peter below. For Peter to wash Jesus' feet would have been fine in this situation. The model of service from below would be intact. However, Jesus upsets the expected normal roles. Peter cannot handle this confusion of social order, nor the level of intimacy suggested by this model.

These two stories together contribute to a model of service that is mutual. In these chapters in John, Jesus is described as deliberately moving from servanthood to friendship in his relationships with the disciples. Jesus is pictured as freely receiving service and freely giving service, both extended as a gift of love. “I no longer call you servants, but I have called you friends.” Jesus is saying: My love for you has meant that I willingly give myself to you as a gift. I have shared my knowledge of God’s will with you freely and lovingly. We are now in communion with each other, a communion in which service is not commanded but embraced. I long to receive this same kind of love from you. In fact, my hope is that this kind of mutual love can become the norm of service relationships within the community of followers, even after my death.

Again, a deep sadness fills me as I observe the hierarchical barriers dividing those within the church from each other, even when they serve. Yet I continue to hope. The symbols of perfume and hair, basin and towel continue to feed my imagination so that I can begin to envision a community in which solidarity and love overcome objections based on false social norms.

Conclusion

I wonder if the experience of mutuality in caring communities, pointed to by the symbol of foot washing, could prepare us to sing a subversive note in the many situations in which we find ourselves. Perhaps the predominant models of service can yet be disrupted and transformed. Perhaps the glimpse of God we have received through Jesus can move us to sing again of service as hospitality and freedom, as receiving and giving, as sharing and communion. It will take courage to sing that first tentative note, because that note will produce dissonance in the monotonous and mournful song of servitude and domination that we are used to. But perhaps, as we sing, we will be joined by others and the melody of service can create a dance of joy. May we embrace this hope as we invite each other to sing a song of friendship and solidarity.

Notes

[1] Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Footwashing (John 13: 1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43.1 (January 1981), 84.

[2] A basic description by Sandra Schneiders of these three models has been the main stimulation for this discussion.

[3] The length of this essay precludes an analysis of power as understood and practiced in the Mennonite community. For a helpful discussion see Benjamin W. Redekop and Calvin W. Redekop, eds. *Power, Authority and the Anabaptist Tradition* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

[4] Schneiders differentiates notions of equality in her article, “Evangelical Equality and Religious Consecration, Mission, and Witness,” *Spirituality Today* 38.4 (Winter 1986), 293-302.

[5] Schneiders, “The Footwashing,” 85.

[6] See Robert K. Greenleaf, *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996) for an example.

[7] See “Keeping the Balance. . . Staying Healthy as Helpers,” *Women’s Concerns Report* No. 115 (July-August 1994).

[8] See Nadine Pence Frantz, ed., “Women Bearing the Cross of Discipleship,” *Women’s Concerns Report 89* (March-April 1990) as an example of the struggle women have with a Mennonite theology of service that has been most directly connected to cross-bearing and suffering.

[9] All biblical quotations are from the NRSV.

[10] John Howard Yoder has also suggested that these passages relativize and undercut the order of the society of the time. See *The Politics of Jesus*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). However, Yoder focuses on “revolutionary subordination,” suggesting that overdoing the celebration of liberation was the problem and that the “tactic” of subordination is crucial in these passages. I submit that the tactic was limited to Paul’s human insights, and that the more crucial theological and ethical insight was the limit put on the hierarchical structures by suggesting that only God is truly the master.

[11] Interestingly enough, the notion of Mennonite “voluntary service” was originally a way for Mennonites to respond to a demand for service that assumed a servitude model. The U.S. and Canadian governments assumed that they had the right to ask every male citizen to serve in the army. The Mennonite church argued for “alternative” ways of service such as in psychiatric hospitals or forestry units so that young men could serve both country and God.

[12] *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1996), 53-54.

[13] “Biblical Interpretation: A Praxis of Discipleship?” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10.1 (Winter 1992), 17-32.

Living out Hope from a Place of Exclusion: Service Rooted in Solidarity

Alix Lozano

Introduction

The new century has begun with tasks for humanity to undertake: poverty and marginalization are growing by leaps and bounds, generating various expressions of violence. This situation confirms that the promises of the neoliberal economic model have not been fulfilled. It is urgent for us to develop a theology that allows the church to reflect on the challenges of, and the commitments to, these tasks. We must remember the words of Jürgen Moltmann: “The more accurately a church recognizes its social context, the more effectively it can become an instrument of God’s justice in [that] society.”[1]

Seen from within Latin American reality, and in particular from Colombian reality, service implies working, being, living, and sometimes dying, for others. Service also means to listen, to weep, to be in solidarity with others, particularly excluded persons. Colombian society has been built on exclusion, and it is from there that an inclusive theology of service can throw light on the present moment. In this essay we will look at the implications of service from the perspective of the Biblical Jubilee. First we will look at the anti-jubilee social order that has reigned in our reality, and then the Biblical Jubilee as hope in the midst of despair. This process will lead us to the challenges of being “jubilary” communities where the option for life and service are the present signs that justify the community task.

An Anti-Jubilary Order

Colombia is experiencing one of the most critical and painful moments of its history. Although it has not always been a violent country, violence has indeed

---

Alix Lozano is Director of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary of Colombia in Bogota, Colombia. Her essay was translated from the Spanish by Rebecca Yoder Neufeld.

been present in its history. At an internal level the country has been in permanent endemic war – fourteen years of a war of independence against Spanish domination, eight general civil wars, fourteen local wars, two international wars, two coups d'etat in the last and the present centuries, party confrontation, generalized uprisings, and the longest internal armed conflict on the continent.[2]

Violence in Colombia is a multicausal phenomenon with dynamics that coexist, overlap and feed one another, and that are supported by a "culture of violence" socialized in the family, educational institutions, the workplace, and the media.[3] This social phenomenon makes itself evident in: (1) *political violence*, concretely an armed internal conflict in which insurgent groups and the State have confronted one another for forty years, and since the 1980s, a conflict to which the insurgency, the State and self-defense paramilitary groups have been parties; (2) *socioeconomic violence*, a product of economic imbalances which are reflected in conflicts that go beyond the political dimension and manifest themselves in a high level of crimes against life, personal safety, and property; (3) *sociocultural violence,* the result of the intolerance of those who regard people from marginalized sectors as the enemy, stigmatizing them because of their race, gender, or behavior, sectors that are executed by the misnamed "social cleansing" groups; (4) the *violence of drug trafficking* and the *violence for control of territories*, provoking the displacement of millions of people, the majority being women and children.

Economic Globalization

Enormous social inequalities are the predominant characteristic of the type of economic adjustment imposed in the last decade not only in Colombia but in all of Latin America. Contrary to the assurances of the defenders of economic globalization (that international competitiveness defines itself in the incorporation of new technologies) what has happened is the worsening of living conditions for the majority of the population and its exclusion from any possibility of life with dignity.

One example is that of privatization, presented as an indispensable complement of openness and globalization, but undertaken without State policies to defend the general interest and rights of citizens. Public services for social well-being have been gradually dismantled, using the argument that they were rife with inefficiency, inequality, and bureaucracy (in the case of the health sector). These transformations are part of the elimination of social rights. Something similar is occurring with the privatization of higher education.

The Interests of the United States

The intervention of the government of the United States and of North American economic interests ranges from anti-communism to drugs. There is pressure for the strict fulfillment of commitments demanded by the International Monetary Fund, such as the privatization of state corporations, a hike in taxes, and the deterioration of workplace conditions. The U.S. has also reaffirmed its anti-drug strategy of eradicating illicit crops in our country, and wants to subordinate the peace process to this objective (under "Plan Colombia"). Plan Colombia is both controversial in the country and yet its scope and content are not fully known. It is fundamentally oriented to the fight against drug trafficking: $1.3 billion U.S. have already been designated, of which 80 percent are for military support: radar, planes, helicopters, training, and financing of new battalions; 12 percent for "policies of human rights, judicial reform, and democratic systems," and the remaining 8 percent to "alternative" development programs.[4]

Biblical Jubilee: Hope through Service

As a process against the anti-jubilary (dis)order, a movement of hope, struggle, and popular utopia is being raised up today from the deepest part of the Christian tradition: the "Biblical Jubilee." The Biblical Jubilee was born in Israel as a community effort to contain and correct social inequality and the tendencies toward discrimination and lack of solidarity. There are four redemptive efforts in the Biblical Jubilee that produce social equality and community reconstruction:

1. Redemption from debt and growing poverty (Deut. 15; Lev. 25; Matt. 6:12; Matt. 18:23-25)

2. Redemption of family ownership of the land (Lev. 25; Ruth)

3. Redemption of the sabbath rest of the whole creation (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 23:10-13; Lev. 25:4,8,10)

> 4. Redemption from all slavery and all oppression (Deut. 15:12-15; Lev.25:39-42)

The redeeming action of the Jubilee functioned as a religious and social pressure from the familial and tribal networks that demanded its periodic application (every seven years for the sabbatical year and every fifty years for the jubilee).

Jesus of Nazareth adopts this popular tradition and proclaims a jubilee on a shabat (day of rest) as an action characteristic of his entire mission:

> *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*
> *because he has anointed me*
> *to bring good news to the poor,*
> *He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,*
> *to proclaim release to the captives*
> *and recovery of sight to the blind,*
> *to let the oppressed go free,*
> *To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus rereads the prophetic memory of Isaiah as an emancipating announcement of life and hope for a today plagued with pains, debts, hunger, chains, and oppression. The reign of God is proclaimed and established as a jubilee: "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them" (Luke 7:22). New networks of solidarity and equality weave together the jubilary communities born under the fire of Pentecost: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

Today, in this crucial hour for Colombia, the horns, drums, speakers, and megaphones call to a new Jubilee as a process in the face of the anti-jubilary social order. We call everyone – believing women, and men who share this clamor and this hope to favor and strengthen a church movement from the south that announces good news to the poor, to the oppressed and the excluded of our country; that proclaims, in a way that privileges them, a time of grace and liberation. A Biblical Jubilee that promotes a sensibility and a practice of solidarity in the churches on behalf of those who are hungry, imprisoned, persecuted, discriminated against, unemployed, indebted, victims of disasters, and displaced. A Biblical Jubilee as the beginning of a theological, spiritual, pastoral, and structural renewal based on solidarity, compassion, mercy, and social action. A militant Biblical Jubilee environmentally committed on behalf of and in defense of the entire creation. A Biblical Jubilee in favor of a moratorium on the external debt, and the renegotiation of property and agrarian debts, in favor of a "law of jubilee" that lightens the sentences of prisoners and proposes a penitentiary system in tune with ancestral cultural traditions. A Biblical Jubilee in favor of peace (shalom) as a new accord for social, cultural, and political coexistence built on the base of social justice, the redistribution of resources, agrarian reform, respect for human rights, demilitarization, military and political nonintervention on the part of the powerful countries, and the recognition of cultural, religious, generational, and sexual diversity.

Being Jubilary Communities

Faced with this panorama, the alternative is to be jubilary communities. In Colombia, being a jubilary community implies the following characteristics.

A community in solidarity

In some countries it is dangerous to be on the side of those who suffer, on the side of the victims and those discriminated against. In many places, demonstrating sensitivity to the excluded does not enjoy the approval of the majority of denominations that are concerned about ecclesial models which compete for loyalties. As it confronts the causes of injustice leading to different expressions of violence, the church must be ready to pay the price entailed in confronting privilege and established powers. The presence of a community that exercises solidarity with all those who suffer oppression then becomes necessary.

This community is one in which the pain of the other becomes the pain of all, and the space for fraternal accompaniment to whose who suffer is real; one in which persons who suffer, affected existentially by the rupture of the social fabric and exclusion, find the necessary strength to continue life, and one in which weeping with those who weep becomes a distinctive practice.

A community that enlivens hope

Enlivening the hope of persons who suffer is a humble and modest task for a community of faith. It implies that with the means available at the present moment, one must continue life, believing and hoping for a better tomorrow. Hope is enlivened through mercy and compassion, being a Samaritan church; an affective and effective option for the victims; visible gestures for justice and human rights; the recovery of worship and of the power of celebration; and the recovery of the power of the word. From the Christian point of view, hope is a collective enterprise and a community task.

A healing community

In this context it is not enough to simply be a community where birth and confirmation of identity are affirmed; healing is also at issue – physical, moral, spiritual, and psychological. It is in the Christian community that sees the human person integrally where a person's possibilities for good will increase. For people affected by any expression of violence, "the reconstruction of the social order is an urgent process to undertake and this must begin with the verbalization of what has been silenced, of what is traumatic and terrifying. Only though the verbalization of the conflict does one achieve awareness of it" and in this way find new spaces and groups of belonging. The function of the healing community, therefore, is to facilitate the conscientization of persons who suffer violence through the social expression of fear, anguish, rage, and meaninglessness.

Since the faith community does not always have all the professional human resources available, it is necessary to nurture and strengthen support networks with other groups or faith communities, so that every community with its own particular emphasis or specificity may "serve one another like good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4: 10).

A community of "Sanctuaries of Peace"

In Colombia this characteristic implies being a people full of the Holy Spirit that welcomes human beings affected by the material and spiritual war waged around them. It receives and affirms them with the peace-making spirit of Jesus Christ. It is a step forward in the exercise of reconciliation with God, oneself, and the neighbor.[5] It is also a nonviolent proposal for the treatment of conflicts, where training in nonviolent conflict resolution, conflict prevention, and transformation is offered. Alternatives to obligatory military service are also offered there, as well as formation for a peaceful life and for reconciliation at many levels – daily, family, neighborhood, church, workplace, etc.

The community is a physical space or a territory of peace that is made known publicly and that demands respect and protection from all violation by force. It is a spiritual "house" – one's own, hospitable, fraternal, and in solidarity with those it receives. It offers refuge and comfort to displaced persons, persecuted for their convictions or affected directly by violence or injustice. It is a house where violent and excluding practices are ended, one that includes women, men, boys, girls, peasant men, peasant women, and indigenous persons without regard to skin color or religious creed; a place of protection in the shelter of the faith community.

In Colombia, the Mennonite church understands service through the small efforts that emerge from the jubilary communities. Recall institutions like the Mennonite Biblical Seminary, which offers a peace-oriented Biblical-theological education as a proposal in a culture of violence. *Justapaz* is a labor on behalf of reconciliation and justice, and *Mencoldes* is an effort focused on development, in addition to two rural schools whose education is rooted in peace, the La Paz Christian Home for seniors, the La Luz bookstore, and the El Recreo rural centre for gatherings and retreats.

Empires come and go, but jubilary communities appear in all ages and societies. It is through them that the presence of the Spirit of God begins its movement. This movement is also carried out through the efforts of groups and entities uniting to change and transform the anti-jubilary order. We recognize the effort of other groups, NGOs, churches, and spaces in which the Mennonite church also participates: the Ecumenical Network of Women for Peace, the Human Rights and Peace Commission of CEDECOL, the National Council for Peace, and the Civil Society of Paz.

Conclusion

The questions that motivated this participation were focused on the understanding of service that we from the south hold, and how we live it, as well as on how to help us to mutually understand and advance towards a more inclusive theology of service. Our theology of service is carried out from a place of exclusion and it is from there, and through an anti-jubilary social order, that we discover the key to being a jubilary community that redeems faith and life in the midst of wrong and meaninglessness. We believe that in Latin America, and particularly in Colombia, God is calling us to serve in different ways, not through paternalism or social assistance but through the key of the Jubilee: forgiving and being forgiven of debts, recovery of land, rest for the whole creation, redemption of the home, liberty for the prisoners, comfort for all those who mourn, healing for the broken-hearted, shelter for the indigent, liberty for the oppressed, having daily bread, proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor, and announcing good news to the poor.

We hope that from here you will accompany us in the building of an inclusive theology of service, that your involvement and participation in accompanying and relating in different ways with the churches of the south may be a constant challenge. Wherever the church accepts this challenge, a Jubilee draws near and the Reign of God approaches. Serving the Lord is serving the poor of the third world: ". . . as you did it to one of the least of those who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40).

Notes

[1] Jürgen Moltmann, *La justicia crea futuro*. Santander: Sal Terrae, 1989, 18.

[2] Sánchez G. Gonzalo, "Los estudios sobre la violencia. Balance y perspectivas." *Pasado y presente de la violencia en Colombia.* Bogotá: Fondo Editorial Cerec, 1995, 19.

[3] *Ibid*., 17, 22-26.

[4] Luis A. Matta Aldana, "El Plan Colombia: Desafio neoliberal contra América Latina." Foro Alternativo contra la globalización y el neoliberalismo, 2001.

[5] "Santuarios de paz: una visión de mensaje y acción para el pueblo de Dios." Bogotá: *Justapaz,* 1999.

In the Belly of a Paradox: Reflections on the Dubious Service of Reflecting on Service

Gerald W. Schlabach

> *Mennonites have had perhaps the most substantial experience of any Protestant tradition in the deployment of people for service – over against more conventional missionary work. Yet we have failed to produce one single monograph which could be called a theology of service. Some of us have speculated that this datum in itself says something important.*
>
> -Wilbert R. Shenk[1]

Once upon a time I was young – young, but perhaps not young enough. Twenty-six, a student of Mennonite history, a product of Goshen College,[2] a protégé of the Mennonite Central Committee's executive secretary through two years of weekly meetings, a seer of the "Anabaptist Vision,"[3] and a would-be practitioner of the "Politics of Jesus,"[4] I thought I could speak for a tradition, even amid a revolution. I thought I could write the first Mennonite theology of service. I thought service could be written.

What follows is a confession of sorts. Like any confession, it is deeply rooted in one particular story. Yet I hope it is also a catholic story. After all, "catholic" really does not mean *universal* except as an eschatological longing for the day "when God will be all in all" and we find that God has woven all our stories into the one story of Christ's Church. Short of the eschaton, Christians are already catholic as they recognize one another to be witnessing truthfully (though always partially) to the God of Jesus Christ, out of their particular stories, across locales, across time.[5] The story that follows, then, tells of embracing the gifts of other Christian traditions more widely precisely,

---

Gerald W. Schlabach is associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. This article first appeared in the Journal for Peace and Justice Studies *10:2 (2000).*

by living out my own tradition most deeply. Its catholic hope is that there are also gifts here for others to embrace.

As a confession, what follows is no less about sin because it is also about gifts. Eventually I did write "a monograph which could be called a theology of service." If sales are any indication of the success of my book, *To Bless All Peoples*,[6] then I may have to confess failure of the most abject kind. More seriously, renewing my reflection on service with this present paper again risks the very sin it will worry about – that the act of writing about service may serve as rationalization for failing to serve. From this dilemma I have no sure escape but God's mercy. I can at least assure the reader that what will be most painful about my confession is that I discourage students from using the first-person singular, yet I violate that rule here. In the very failure of words, confession may at last take its most truthful shape, giving way and pointing beyond itself to praise of God.

In any case, the pretense was not mine alone. At many points, the story of the Mennonite Central Committee has been a story of audacious young men and women who have gone out into our bloody, turbulent, and arrogant world not so much with expertise as with a certain intangible gift of character – something that has not been their own production but the product of their communities and their inheritance. With a strange mixture of subjective humility and objective brashness, MCC workers have regularly gone into war zones – and into zones of cultural, social, economic, or religious complexity. With just enough naivete to serve them well, they have (at their best) immersed themselves in local communities and become expert in the dignity, suffering, and potential of those communities – often surpassing by far the expertise of technocrats. This they have done because they have had a communion of churches behind and before them.

Theology of service is part of what has made all this possible. But there is a catch. Mennonite theology of service has not so much been written as interwoven into practices of mutual aid, into alternatives to military service, into ways of hospitality, and – if written at all – it has appeared in articles and pamphlets ostensibly about *other* matters. "War, peace, and nonresistance." "Discipleship." "Concern." "Social problems." "Politics of Jesus." Mennonite theology of service has been part of a tapestry that we risk shredding when we name it as something discrete.

In the early 1980s, in revolutionary Nicaragua, amid a region of social injustice and surging reaction, naming it was part of my assignment. My wife Joetta and I were MCC country representatives. The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches of Nicaragua wanted to pre-empt charges that they were shirkers – or in this case, counter-revolutionaries – and do more to help their communities develop in ways that benefited the poor. They worked from an understandable mixture of compassion and self-interest not unlike that of other Mennonites in other times of war and social upheaval. Not of one mind about revolution itself, church leaders mostly agreed nonetheless that the failure of Christian churches to work courageously for social justice might have made a Marxist, Sandinista form of social change historically necessary. Part of the problem (said enough local church leaders to get MCC's attention) was that Mennonite missionaries had postponed talking much about Anabaptism or peacemaking until it was almost too late. But better late than never. My long-term assignment was to devise some kind of regional MCC "peace portfolio." But first Joetta and I knew we needed to develop workshops and materials on Mennonite theology of service.

Unfortunately, service itself kept getting in the way.

> *Like the prophet Jonas, whom God ordered to go to Nineveh, I found myself with an almost uncontrollable desire to go in the opposite direction. God pointed one way and all my "ideals" pointed the other. It was when Jonas was traveling as fast as he could away from Nineveh, toward Tarsus, that he was thrown overboard, and swallowed by a whale who took him where God wanted him to go. . . . Like Jonas himself I find myself traveling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox.*
>
> -Thomas Merton[7]

Through his writings, the Trappist monk Thomas Merton would mentor me in coming years in many ways. In the press of administrative demands, unexpected visitors – and the sheer burden of ordinary life in the strange shell of a city that was earthquake-ravaged Managua even before the years of insurrection and counterrevolution – I often longed for solitude as Merton had done. Merton's journals offered a voyeuristic yet salutary delight, as I read him struggling in the belly of a paradox just enough like my own to reassure me.

Merton's problem was that writing about his contemplative, monastic life seemed to have jeopardized that life. The unexpected success of his autobiographical *Seven Storey Mountain* had helped attract new postulants to his silent Cisterian monastery in Kentucky, filling it with the bustle of new construction and communal tensions. "If I have broken this silence," Merton once remarked, "and if I have been to blame for talking so much about this emptiness that it came to be filled with people, who am I to praise the silence any more? Who am I to publicize this emptiness? Who am I to remark on the presence of so many visitors. . . ?"[8] He kept wanting to flee to some other monastery or even become a hermit, but his vows of stability and obedience required him to seek the permission of his abbot. His abbot, however, required him to keep writing. Only slowly did Merton come to see where this whale of an impasse had taken him, for writing allowed him more solitude than most of his brothers, and eventually he learned he could pray while writing. That resolution sounds too happy in the short re-telling, however, for midway he had to confess, "My life is a great mess and tangle of half-conscious subterfuges to evade grace and duty. I have done all things badly. I have thrown away great opportunities. . . . If I were more absorbed in the Presence of God, I would be a better writer and would write much less."[9]

The analogy between Merton's problem and mine will not hold if pressed too far. But I still wonder about the opportunities I missed because I resented the demands they might make upon my time. I wonder about the grace I evaded by preferring texts while treating time spent out among churches, pastors, and development promoters in that oral culture as more duty than grace. Even today, I still cannot disentangle myself from a dilemma, whose explaining might involve yet another "half-conscious subterfuge" or might yet offer a real service to others.

The dilemma was one that many church workers will recognize as the recurring tension between the urgent and the important. The urgent was obvious in the headlines of *La Barricada* after we had assumed our duties as MCC country representatives in 1983. No longer simply a cross-border nuisance, the U.S.-backed contras were now striking in the heart of the country. MCC administrators had originally chosen to locate us and our peace portfolio in

Nicaragua because it had had its revolution and seemed relatively free from the kind of repression that constrained our colleagues in Guatemala and El Salvador. Now, however, a low-intensity war was heating up, laying siege, and inflicting many things far worse than our own urgent, unexpected, unwelcome new tasks. But it did inflict those too. Even as the Nicaraguan economy began to grind down, making every bus ride for every administrative errand more tiresome, we could hardly claim to be serving "in the name of Christ" if we ignored the needs of a growing population of displaced persons. What time we had for writing went increasingly to articles against U.S. policy toward Central America. What time we had for developing a peace portfolio went increasingly to consultancy with Nicaraguan evangelical leaders negotiating on behalf of conscientious objectors.[10]

Certainly these urgent demands offered opportunities to network and teachable moments for reflecting on our theology of peace and service together with fellow believers in Nicaragua and the Central American region. But even as urgent tasks tended to preclude attention to important ones they also called attention to their very importance. Central American evangelical leaders, and activists in fledgling networks of nonviolence such as *Servicio Paz y Justica*, regularly lamented that Mennonites had not begun sharing and applying their peace theology in previous decades. Central American Mennonite leaders regularly wished they had biblical and theological resources already in hand, in Spanish, at appropriate education levels, to meet this need even among their own people, now that it was obvious. Somehow I conceived of writing not just workshop materials on service but that first "single monograph" on Mennonite theology of service, which we wished we had available now, ¡*ya*! The important was no less important because it was being recognized a decade or so too late. Still, to write theological materials on service and peaceable social action – was that important enough to justify writing rather than serving, in solitude rather than in action?

Eventually our assignment did evolve in such a way that I could dedicate myself full time to the peace portfolio in Honduras. Meanwhile SEMILLA, an Anabaptist seminary in Guatemala that holds classes throughout the region, was beginning to gather new resources and offer new possibilities that complemented what MCC could do. But within a year of moving to Honduras, Joetta and I were facing the fact that we were burned out. Or should I say, being regurgitated, soon to be spewed from the belly of the paradox back onto the shores of North America? Not a particularly pleasant image, but perhaps a consoling one. If only I knew where Nineveh was, much less say I've now preached there to some effect. Maybe I had actually fled Nineveh for Tarsus. For when I finally had opportunity to write more extensively on theology of service, I hesitated over another layer of the paradox.

> *Was it only for dramatic affect that Jesus went out of his way to show, not only what the Samaritan did, but also what he did not do? The story arose, after all, because "a lawyer, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" Jesus recognized that when service to fellow humanity becomes a point for debate, the debaters may have already missed the point. And so he not only presented the outcast Samaritan as a jarring example of right human relations, he also confronted our patterns of self-justification. He showed us how properly "holy" people may be the most adept at avoiding responsibility for human suffering.*
>
> -Unpublished notes for a "theology of service," 1985

Could something be going very wrong when we have to write about service? The urgency I felt to write was not just for Central Americans. It also grew from anxiety about the North American Mennonite church.

Even now I can barely imagine serving in revolutionary Nicaragua without the support of a peoplehood. Obviously financial support was necessary, but more intangible forms of support were absolutely crucial. To have a family that is proud, not disappointed, when one pursues vocational goals that are not particularly lucrative; a family that does not panic at every rumor of war; to grow up in churches where enough stories of conscientious objectors and overseas workers circulate to make service seem a normal thing to do; to accumulate the wisdom of past MCC workers who have tested the ambiguities of service in places like Vietnam – these are great gifts. Called upon to speak for nonviolence amid a revolution and in conversation with liberation theologies, I would have lost hope under the pressures of injustice if I did not know that my people had been confronting hard questions for generations. We could work from a calm and respectful assurance that our church, however imperfectly, had not only stood for alternatives to exploitation and warfare, but had constituted an alternate history that gave us an identity other than simply "U.S. citizen."

Simultaneously, however, we accumulated troubling warnings that we dare not idealize our tradition. An embarrassingly large number of Mennonites had voted for Ronald Reagan and seemed convinced by his gross distortions of the Sandinistas' record. Debates with fundamentalist Mennonite missionaries in the region over whether and how Christians ought to participate in struggles for social justice seemed to go over the same ground again and again. Trips back to the States to speak on Central America might reassure us of how many people were providing sanctuary and opposing U.S. policy on one day, but remind us of our church's affluence and acculturation the next day. Whatever the balance, this mix itself suggested fragmentation – just when we sensed a greater need for a collective peoplehood witness than ever. While struggling to write about "service," the limitations of that concept were becoming increasingly clear, at least if service was taken to mean individual acts of "charity" and volunteerism.

Even when we had been seeking only a response from one or two individuals, we had really been seeking the faithful *communities* that had nurtured them in a servanthood tradition. This was my conclusion after participating in a few MCC personnel searches and observing many more. We often needed a certain kind of person with a mix of specialized skills and general adaptability. That much could be said of many organizations, but the right people also needed to possess a modest lifestyle, social awareness, and – to sustain their commitment and struggles – an authentic Christian piety. In my unscientific reading, these seemed to be the kind of people whom MCC could send into difficult situations and trust to find their way, the kind of people who could push forward creative new projects while respecting local communities and working patiently with local churches. We met lots of *internacionalistas* visiting or working in "solidarity" with the Nicaraguan people. But beyond MCC circles it was among people who worked for social justice out of deep roots in their respective Christian traditions that we most consistently found similar combinations of commitment and openness, apparently because they were responding from something more than ideology or the impact of headlines.

So while some MCC workers return to North America with an urgent and prophetic sense of calling to work for social change back here, I returned with a more pastoral sense of the need to sustain communal traditions that could work and witness over the long haul. My nagging, growing, sense was that we dare not take for granted the traditions that have nurtured us. Even activists who chafe at the slow pace of change in their apparently unresponsive traditions are often drawing on the resources of those traditions; their activism thus proves parasitic if they do not help replenish its sources.

Even at this point my first instinct was to warn, to write, and to propose a vision that would be so elegant yet explanatory that any reader would instantly say, Yes! So we must live and be and do. I had come to see God working in the world pre-eminently through "Abrahamic communities" – creative minorities who receive God's blessing as an invitation not to self-satisfaction but to bless other peoples by taking the risky lead in living out the social transformations God desires for every larger whole.[11] This vision was my synthesis of what I had learned from people like Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, veteran Mennonite missionary David Shank, and Archbishop Helder Camara of Brazil. It held promise for providing an integrated response to problems bedeviling Mennonite social ethics. It articulated the best of what Central American congregations were doing in their own neighborhoods and villages. Above all, it made clear that our calling is not just to *do* service activities but to *be* a people of service. I still stand behind it. But it has carried me "toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox."

For the warning and the theory have raised this question: What does motivate, form, and sustain an Abrahamic community or peoplehood? Telling people they should form one, join one, or be one is insufficient. If we have been such a community without calling ourselves one, but now insist that the point of our communal identity is to be one, have we already missed the point? Could writing out the vision be a rearguard action within a disintegrating tradition? Such questions nagged when I finally had time and support for writing. If I or my church now needs an explicit theology of service in order to serve, is that a sign of deep and humanly irreversible unfaithfulness?

> *The truth that Augustine made in the* *Confessions* *had eluded him for years. It appears before us as a trophy torn from the grip of the unsayable after a prolonged struggle on the frontier between speech and silence. What was at stake was more than words. The 'truth' of which Augustine spoke was not merely a quality of a verbal formula, but veracity itself, a quality of a living human person. Augustine 'made the truth' – in this sense, became himself truthful – when he found a pattern of words to say the true thing well. But both the 'truth' that Augustine made and the 'light' to which it led were for him scripturally guaranteed epithets of Christ, the pre-existent second person of the trinity.*
>
> -James J. O'Donnell[12]

Apparently others too were struggling to find new approaches. As Joetta and I returned to live in the U.S., MCC commissioned me to write a book on Christian responses to poverty – the book that became *And Who is My Neighbor?*[13] The idea was that too much of what MCC was doing to educate its constituency concerning global justice issues had ended up as preaching to the converted. Beyond their circles, others were hearing MCC's concerns as "guilt trips." Even when people *are* guilty, guilt *alone* is a poor motivator. MCC workers and their guests often testified that what really had changed them was their personal encounter with the poor. So MCC Information Services had begun collecting stories from the poor themselves. The challenge was to combine these stories with Bible studies in order to replicate in ordinary Sunday school rooms a personal encounter with the poor. Although the assignment recognized the limitations of writing, it inevitably took recourse in writing once again.

If writing service is tricky, then editing the voice of the poor may be trickier still. One of the crucial gifts I have received in life was my editor for this project – John Rogers, a gently incisive African-American who was working for Herald Press at the time. *Quit writing detached biblical and social analysis*, he insisted. *You're still writing from a position of power,* he implied. *Tell the story of your own poverty; help people connect with their own.* If anyone else had told me this, I would have dismissed it as an attempt to spiritualize poverty. The book that resulted sought to expose the structural isolation, fearfulness, and impoverishment of our lives when we live in affluent separation from the poor. It invited middle-class Christians to take risks that might bring them the true wealth of human relationships that the poor often experience more deeply than the affluent. Under John's guidance, the project also drew me back toward our common human need for God's grace.

"We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Why had this truth been so hard to recognize? Service, response to the poor, commitment to struggle for justice, love of neighbor extended even to enemies – call it what you will, it is not finally a "should" so much as a "therefore," a response to God's prior work in our lives. It is a response to God's grace. The pattern can be traced through the whole biblical story. The family of Abraham and Sarah became a blessing to the peoples as it trusted in God's blessing (Gen. 12:1-3). The commandments of the Torah found their premise in "the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). Faithful Hebrews were to host strangers, free their slaves, and bring gifts for the poor to the altar, remembering how God had first treated them when they were strangers, slaves, and afflicted (Ex. 22:21-22; Deut. 15:15; Deut. 26:5-13). Likewise, Jesus' first disciples could learn to forgive one another only when they remembered the exorbitantly greater mercy God had shown them (Matt. 18:23-35). Similarly, Jesus' call to bear the cross became intelligible as an act of hope, not capitulation, because the disciples had already experienced his healing touch, his deliverance and, most of all, the life-giving magnetism of his very person. We have been freed and empowered to love our enemies and perforce our neighbors because, as Paul put it in Romans 5, God acted first to reconcile us while we were not only weak but outright enemies of God.

There was one thing that had made it hard to trace Christian service back to its source in God's grace. Even after charting this pattern in two different books, it bothered me that I was starting to sound like Martin Luther. Luther's argument was that authentic love of neighbor must always be a grateful response to God's prior work, and will in fact flow spontaneously from any true believer.[14] I had heard too many evangelicals who claimed that service and social change would flow spontaneously from personal trust and gratitude for God's love, yet they had not convinced me with their lives. To make a long and unfinished story short, if "faith seeks understanding" then the conviction I am now trying to understand is this: We *should* be able to affirm what is right and biblical about Luther in a way that draws (with Catholicism) upon a more communal, embodied, and sacramental notion of grace, and that does more to train us (with Anabaptism) to follow Christ in life as disciples. Almost everything I have written and begun to work on since I finished writing self-consciously on "theology of service" has in some way related to this project. Even my doctoral dissertation on self-love and self-denial in the thought of St. Augustine responded to background questions about what makes lives of service sustainable, and has prompted emerging questions about how best to express the relationship between grace and discipleship. But perhaps those questions still fail to state the task of sustaining a servant peoplehood communally enough.

During my initial work on theology of service, MCC Executive Secretary John Lapp gave me a slender book by Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of the Orthodox Church in India entitled *The Meaning and Nature of Diakonia*. Gregorios chides Protestants and their "basic prophetic-preaching emphasis" for failing to root their message in "a community deeply rooted in the mystery of the tabernacle, the presence of the Christian community not only as the people of God, but also as participating in Christ as High Priest of the world, . . . a priestly kingdom."[15] I probably was not ready for this message, however, for I still wanted words to do too much of the work of service, and service to always be the kind that demonstrably does work. Only now do I begin to understand Gregorios's insistence that "the prophetic and the cultic are not opposed to each other. The cultic is the true matrix of the prophetic."[16]

> *These rites, baptism and eucharist, are not just "religious things" that Christian people do. They are the essential rituals of our politics. Through them we learn who we are. Instead of being motives or causes for effective social work on the part of the Christian people, these liturgies* are *our effective social work. For if the church* is *rather than has a social ethic, these actions are our most important social witness. It is in baptism and eucharist that we see most clearly the marks of God's kingdom in the world. They set our standard, as we try to bring every aspect of our lives under their sway.*
>
> -Stanley Hauerwas[17]

The journey I have travelled in the belly of the paradox that is the dubious service of writing about service, has marked a return. Writing theology of service (like any systematic writing of theology) *may* provide a real service – but only as it participates in an interwoven ecology, an interdependent web, of serving and being served in the people of God. Of course, such a people would not be a people at all if God in Christ had not first come to us incarnate as a human servant, obedient even to death on a cross (Phil. 2). No one idea will sustain such a people; no elegant teaching or prophetic harangue will motivate faithful service; no single correction in ancient Christian theology will set God's people right. In the ecology of Christian peoplehood, we need all that weaves us together – all of the liturgy, all the stories, all the mentors, all the acts of forgiveness and mutual aid, all the prayer, all the patience with annoying brothers and sisters, all the sacraments, and (finally, yes, in the context of Christ embodied) all the teaching that names and writes the pattern of God's grace, evoking our grateful response. For it is the triune God who creates, reconciles, and sustains this people, even when part of the web is still being woven or has perhaps been cut. All the rest is re-enactment.

Notes

[1] Wilbert R. Shenk to Gerald Schlabach, 23 December 1983. Shenk is a leading Mennonite missiologist who has served as overseas secretary for the Mennonite Board of Missions and taught at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. He is now Professor of Mission History and Contemporary Culture, School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary.

[2] Goshen College in Indiana has been a leading intellectual center for North American Mennonites, especially in the Mennonite Church denomination. By gathering scholars around him, and by founding the Mennonite Historical Society and the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Dean Harold S. Bender made the college a center for Anabaptist studies during 1930s through the 1950s. Also active at Goshen during this time was Guy F. Hershberger, a guiding thinker and coalition-builder as Mennonites worked out responses to the labor movement, military conscription, the US civil rights movement and urbanization. For many decades, the college's motto has been "Culture for Service." Since the late sixties that emphasis on service has expressed itself in the college's Study-Service Term, by which most students fulfill a general-education requirement in international studies by spending three months overseas.

[3] Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Church History* 13 (March 1944):3-24; *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 18 (April 1944):67-88.

[4] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed., reprint, 1972 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994).

[5] I owe the beginning of these reflections to a remark by Stanley Hauerwas that "the Church's word for *universal* is not really *universal* but *catholic*." I would argue that even the affirmations of the ecumenical councils of the Church can, in their historical particularity, only be understood as authoritative insofar as they were the product of this sort of mutual recognition across particular local Christian communions.

[6] Gerald W. Schlabach, *To Bless All Peoples: Serving with Abraham and Jesus*. Peace and Justice Series, no. 12 (Scottdale, PA.: Herald Press, 1991).

[7] Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), 10-11.

[8] *Ibid*., 357.

[9] *Ibid.*, 193, 239.

[10] See Gerald W. Schlabach, "Revolutionary Nicaragua: Military Service, Conscientious Objection and Nation-Building," in *The Role of the Church in Society: An International Perspective*, ed. Urbane Peachey (Carol Stream, IL: International Mennonite Peace Committee, Mennonite World Conference, 1988), 51-70.

[11] Also see Gerald W. Schlabach, "The Blessing of Abraham's Children: A Theology of People," *Mission Focus* 19.4 (December 1991): 52-55; "Beyond Two-Versus One-Kingdom Theology: Abrahamic Community as a Mennonite Paradigm for Engagement in Society," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 11.3 (Fall 1993):187-210.

[12] James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, Latin text with English commentary (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), xvii.

[13] Gerald W. Schlabach, *And Who is My Neighbor?: Poverty, Privilege and the Gospel of Christ* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990).

[14] Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," 1520, trans. W. A. Lambert, rev. Harold J. Grimm, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 31, ed. Harold J. Grimm; Helmut T. Lehmann, gen. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 327-77.

[15] Paulos Gregorios, *The Meaning and Nature of Diakonia*. Risk Book Series (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), 30-31.

[16] *Ibid.*, 12.

[17] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 108.

Living Rightly in the Land[1] : Reflection on MCC Service in a Postmodern Era

Judy Zimmerman Herr and Robert Herr

Introduction

Our world is noisy with news of things falling apart and of things coming together. Those who see things falling apart focus on the decline in the status of institutions that humans have counted on to order their lives: established church structures, nation states, and well-run alliances and international organizations. Those who see things coming together in new ways look to systems centering on communication, ethnic, or civil society entities. Seeing promise in the second of these tendencies,[2] we will pursue this bias in light of recent thought that explores the overlapping boundaries of theology, philosophy, and social engagement within the framework of postmodernism.[3]

Being positive about these new possibilities is not to suggest optimism about all that may be coming in the near future. A time of great change will inevitably bring with it considerable dislocation. The erosion of nation-state power has devolved considerable authority to private, corporate structures and multilateral financial institutions, with problematic results. Being positive suggests rather a noticing of new opportunities and responsibilities, perhaps ones that move closer to what the Christian Church should be about. The breaking down of some central assumptions shaping our world since the Enlightenment calls for reflection by the church as it seeks its place in a new world.

If its scope of authority and influence is receding, the nation state will likely shed its economic and social welfare responsibilities first, while retaining with new vigilance its security functions. Security and self-preservation have always been at the heart of any state. In the Western world of the last several

---

Judy Zimmerman Herr and Robert Herr are Co-directors of the Mennonite Central Committee International Peace Office, based in Akron, Pennsylvania.

centuries, the church has been defined as separate from the state. In recent history this is interpreted as the church's proper role in society, rooted in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century birth of the modern nation state following the break-up of older medieval structures. Churches in the Anabaptist tradition claim to have been at the origin of this separated role for the church. Because of this claim, the Anabaptist tradition has perhaps a special role to play in re-visioning a healthy and faithful church politic for the world now emerging.

While reflection on this level of change would be fruitful, our goal here is more modest. We write as staff persons of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and are thinking mostly of its mandate and responsibilities. Founded in 1920 to provide aid to Russian famine victims, MCC works in ministries of relief, development, and peacebuilding in over forty countries. MCC is owned and governed by U.S. and Canadian Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations, though it includes workers from other denominations and works in partnership with persons and groups from all faiths. MCC is a program agency, designed first of all to be engaged in the world with the outstretched hand of Christian compassion. Peace reflection in MCC considers what it means to follow Christ in the very concrete acts of service to which the organization is called. MCC's particular programmatic history shapes its understanding of discipleship.

Our approach follows most closely that of theologians John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas. This approach asks Christians to think of faith, and faith-based responses to the struggles they encounter, as taking on full meaning in a particular context. The story, or narrative, people live within provides the context for their reflection on right living, especially as they look at it through the lens and witness of Jesus. In our case, this narrative community is primarily the life and work of MCC, i.e., the specific people, contexts, and expressions that collect within MCC. Though we focus on this particular context, we do not need to narrow it. It can be as broad and inclusive as MCC's experience allows. This context differs from other contexts, even other church contexts, so that learning here has a uniqueness not reproduced elsewhere.

The breakdown of the rational, Enlightenment paradigm for understanding the world, exemplified in changes in the decline of nation state centralized institutions and structures, can be a fruitful context for new reflection on theology and ethics. The kind of reflection based in Yoder's thought and developed by Hauerwas and others is helpful as the church learns to live in a postmodern world. In this paper, we first summarize some themes from postmodern thinking which shape the current context of the church. We then suggest the need for more deliberate thought among Mennonites about a "Mennonite social teaching." We then suggest some implications for Mennonite understandings of what it means to be a peace church and for MCC's specific program work. We hope that these particular, contextual, MCC-related thoughts can contribute to a wider reflection process.

Philosophical and Theological Underpinnings

Knowledge is Particular

We begin by pointing to several themes common to postmodern thinking which shape current reality. The first is the notion that all knowledge is particular. The Enlightenment or "modern" assumption of rational, universal discourse meant that all language or thought systems were judged by a universal standard. Thus the church was obliged to explain and justify its beliefs and ethics in universal terms. The assumed universal standard judged the intelligibility and correctness of any philosophical or theological system of thought.

Postmodernism suggests there are no such universals that stand outside or above particular systems of thought or language. Rather, all theories and ways of knowing derive from particular social settings and praxis, and all are embedded in a particular narrative. In other words, who we are shapes our knowing. The implication, as John Milbank observes, is that "once, there was no 'secular'."[4] The modern split between a secular (rational, universally known) realm and a sacred realm (which has to be explained in terms of the former) was itself a product of a particular context and narrative tradition. Any discourse, including the rational and scientific, is only one among a variety of ways of viewing the world. There is no impartial point of view.

If this is the case, then the church need not justify or explain its claims in terms of general knowledge but can assert them as one particular among others. Jesus serves as an ethical norm for Christians in a way that need not be congruent with any supposed universal norm. Asking what would happen if everyone acted this way is not a useful judgment for moral actions. An intellectual framework that suggests there is a body of understanding that some people have and others must accept, because it is right or more powerful, is a pattern that easily leads to violence and enslavement. Milbank suggests that a central Christian virtue is "persuasion," which is intrinsic to the Christian logos itself. Persuasion, rather than a dialectical contest between opposing views, is the way God's created order sustains itself.[5] If we have peace, it rests upon this persuasion, because the world is programmed to function rhetorically and not dialectically or via power. Yoder in a similar vein refers to the virtue of patience, implying that Christian ethical behavior has the time needed to work with social change through persuasion, if change is to be lasting and meaningful.[6]

An example of the importance of the particular, of persuasion, and of patience might be the often-appealed-to notion that MCC is "field-led" in its program and planning. This idea, that plans must emerge from the local context and take it with utmost seriousness, has various roots in the organization. It fits with a valuing of indigenous knowledge and a respect of the context, both of which represent good development methodology. And it's also pragmatic – what works in one setting may not work in another. If there is to be change, it will take time; it will be based on persuasion and come from within. But we suggest that such an orientation, not only to the planning of overall program but also to the elicitive style in which MCC goes about its work, is strengthened by the notion that all knowledge, and therefore also all action, is rooted in the particular. It is perhaps true that in MCC this orientation comes not so much from reflection on postmodern understanding of reality, as from resisting the legacy of colonialism and the presence of imperialism. But the habit requires nurture, because the tendency to impose "right" over "wrong," and to broker the difference from a position of power, is still prevalent and is a lingering residue of the modern world that the Christian logos calls us to question.

History is Contingent

The loss of universals implies there is also no grand cause-and-effect scheme operative in history. Michel Foucault contends there is no over-arching system that explains history. In a postmodern world, things happen but we can't explain why; we also cannot act with the assumption that we can predict the effect of our action.[7] In some respects, this way of thinking seems to cut humans adrift, with no points of reference. Certainly some postmodernists would celebrate that notion. On the other hand, Foucault offers this view as countering the totalitarian mind-set of a Hitler or Stalin, the grand schemes of social engineering which destroy people. He suggests that understanding history as contingent is not a call to refrain from action, but rather a hopeful suggestion that even the smallest acts may have consequences and may change the course of human events in ways we cannot calculate. Foucault also suggests that a belief in pursuing many actions simultaneously is preferable to the notion that one analytical framework can carry in a unified way the resistance and initiative needed to address today's challenges.

Communities Shape Identities

Because knowledge is only ever particular, it is socially based. That is, this particular knowledge and the morals or "virtues" derived from it are based in the practices of particular communities. Alasdair MacIntyre argues that virtues – that is, good actions which help us to know the good – grow out of, and are learned through, the practices of communities.[8] More specifically, Hauerwas says Christianity is not so much a set of beliefs as a way of forming people: "Through being ingrafted into the Christian story and learning specific practices, Christians see the world in a new way. Because one acts in the world one sees, one therefore will also live differently."[9]

This kind of thinking may seem self-evident to Mennonites, who have long stressed the importance of the community in shaping ethics. The larger implication, which may be more elusive, is that this is true for everyone. Again, there is no neutral ground; everyone and every conceptual scheme is shaped by a particular community and context.

The "realist" school of Christian ethics, led by theologians Reinhold Niebuhr and H. Richard Niebuhr but shaping much Protestant thought in the twentieth century, assumes that the church must work within the terms set by the state. William Cavanaugh suggests that the thought of Jaques Maritain had a similar effect on the Catholic Church.[10] These thinkers posit an autonomous social process, defined by a secular order (meaning "neutral" or "realist"), which the church must fit into and try to affect.

The view we are describing says no: what we know and say and do are shaped by a specific community, which for Christians is the human, temporal institution of the church. We engage other communities, and those shaped by them, including government, from the context and categories of our community. The church can offer an alternative precisely because it is a particular community that nurtures particular kinds of practices. Gerhard Lohfink describes this "contrast society" as the way God has chosen to work in the world, from the calling into being of Israel as a people, through the ministry of Jesus, and now through the church.[11] Today we would include the tradition of Rabbinic Judaism in such a list. It is for this reason that thinkers like Yoder and Hauerwas see the life of the church as so important. Our existence is our witness. Or, to paraphrase Milbank's words, theology *is* social theory.

Cavanaugh asks, what "disappears" the church?" He suggests that in the Chilean context, the thought of Maritain and its encouragement of the privatization of the church rendered the church unable to stand visibly as a counter-performance to the activity of a torturing state. In looking at Mennonite practices of church in our day, we might also ask Cavanaugh's question. The pull of our society toward a privatization of religious practice does suggest some similarities to the church he describes. But we contend that a misunderstanding of what it means to be an alternative or contrast society may also "disappear" the church. If *alternative* equals *withdrawal*, or choosing not to engage society, or if patterns evolve that have this effect, then the church is also disappeared. Precisely in order to offer a contrast, to present new possibilities, Christians must be engaged in society at all levels, but with their thinking and imaginations shaped by a counter-history. "One of many ways the church can be of service to the world is to nurture alternative ways of seeing the world that question what are thought to be necessities. . . . To be able, at least to some extent, to think outside a given hegemonic cultural imagination you need an alternative community that tells another narrative, forms other practices, extols other virtues."[12]

Power is Everywhere

Along with a de-centralized notion of knowledge and of the source of ethics, postmodern thinkers have asserted a de-centralized way of understanding power. Foucault suggests that power is diffuse and is the product of all relationships. No one is therefore without some kind of power.[13]

One result of the Enlightenment and its assumptions about rational, systematized thought was an understanding of society as composed of two levels: isolated, rather disempowered, individuals; and a centralized state. In this view power resides in the state. In contrast, Foucault describes power as "capillary"; that is it reaches to the smallest "cell" of society. In addition, he argues that power never exists without resistance. Thus, on all levels, from the individual to the corporate, we find both power and resistance to the exercise of power. Coupled with the sense that history is radically contingent, this postmodern view suggests change is always possible. Rather than seeing as significant or primary only the work that tries to effect change at the nation state, large corporate, or political level, this view gives meaning and importance to work at all levels of society. It implies that we are not able to judge what is most "useful" in an ultimate sense: the breakdown of cause-and-effect certainties, and the fact that both power and resistance are found at all levels, imply a re-definition of effectiveness.

Yoder notes that change and creativity in society most often come from a minority, from dissenters, from the margins, rather than from the "centers of power."[14] Further, he points to this as the way God has chosen to work. Through the resurrection community of the cross, through empowered weakness and willing suffering, the world is changed and the ultimate battle is won. This leads to the need for what Hauerwas calls "living out of control." It does not imply that we do not plan or work for change, but that we can act without needing to control or ensure the outcome of our actions – in other words, without "the illusion of omnipotence." "To plan in such a manner involves breaking the self-deception that justice can only be achieved through a power and violence that seeks to assure its efficacy."[15]

MCC's bias through most of its development activity has been toward working with civil society and local communities. Again, this approach may not have initially been so much calculated as based on a sense of where MCC as a small actor felt most comfortable. But it can also reflect an assumption about where and how societal change occurs. Even in settings where it seems state structures are the best ones to work with, MCC attempts to introduce a bias toward civil society, for example, by including a local church-related NGO in its poverty alleviation project with the Chinese government. Foucault's understanding of power and change present at all levels helps to reinforce a sense that this is the right place to put our efforts. This orientation is not a call for soft programming or a way to avoid hard questions of accountability and human foibles, but rather an argument about where we can best join our efforts.

The Need for a Mennonite Social Teaching

Reflecting on the way the world works takes us to questions of how the church interacts with this world. What posture are Christians called to, when thinking about how their lives impact, or should impact, the world that supports those lives? This has, of course, been a central concern of the church throughout history. The Roman Catholic Church, through its long history of meticulous theological reflection, has developed an explicit body of knowledge referred to as Catholic Social Teaching. Catholic Social Teaching has been and still is developed by a process of review within the ecclesial magisterium, a centralized process controlled by authorized church officials. In comparison to what Mennonites and other churches coming out of the sixteenth-century Reformation have developed, this teaching has the feel of a carefully constructed code for social behavior.

Mennonites have never developed such an explicit process, tending to prefer a decentralized polity focusing on experience and praxis. Following Jesus as known through community discernment has always been more important than developing careful theological systems to direct social behavior or theological understanding. However, in light of the contemporary changes in our world, we suggest that more reflection may be helpful. This need not lead to some formal code ("Mennonite Social Teaching"!), but it should enhance our confidence to respond actively and with a sense of theological direction when we engage ourselves in the created order God has provided.

Most Christian ethical thought has been based in a dual understanding of the way God relates to the world: directly, through revelation; and indirectly, through what we can know from nature and reason, often called "natural theology." If the life and teachings of Jesus do not provide an adequate basis for discerning all that God would have us be about in this world, we must look to the natural order or God's good creation for insights. Theological "realism" as presented by the brothers Niebuhr is based in this understanding. Since Jesus' ethic is not realistic for the problems we face, we must look elsewhere for help in making difficult ethical decisions. In doing what God wants us to do, we will not have perfect options since the world is compromised and presents realistic situations, not ideal ones. Christian pacifism, in this line of thinking, is not realistic since it does not help us solve the problems that today's world (defined primarily by the rational world of the nation state) presents. Pacifism should be an ideal for the future, but it is not applicable now. In general, right actions are known through rational reflection, which is available to anyone, whether Christian or not.

Mennonites have generally resisted this way of understanding, largely because one of the first things to go missing when our source of ethics is the natural order or creation is a clear sense of God's will for peace as being the way followers of Jesus should live. Mennonite thought holds that our ethic and actions are based on Jesus' life and teachings. However, without an alternative theological framework, we have allowed ourselves to be defined by the realists. Then, because the world is seen to require ethical compromise in order to be "responsibly" engaged, the response from many Mennonites, and from some other Christian pacifists, is to withdraw.[16]

An alternative to this view, brought to attention by Hendrik Berkhof and John Howard Yoder, and developed extensively by Walter Wink, focuses on the "Powers" language of the New Testament. This moves beyond the realist/compromised – idealist/withdrawn dichotomy. Berkhof, Yoder, and Wink contend that the world is not a secular, natural order with its own rational way of working to which we must adjust in order to be realistic. On the contrary, the world is made up of Powers ordained by God for our well-being. Creation, nature, and the modern secular context are derived from the Powers that God put in place for our good. Though designed to be good, they are fallen and therefore tend to be in rebellion. We can assume that they include much good, yet because they are vulnerable to seeing themselves as sovereign and demanding total allegiance, we will need a way to judge them – to determine when and how we can work with them without violating God's will. Yoder refers to this as the most "responsible" way to act, because it is based in discernment of God's over-arching purpose for the world.[17] The church is the human, temporal body given by God as a place for such discernment. Christians need to be involved in the world, assisting the Powers designed by God for our well being, but Christians also have in the church a more reliable source of human ethical discernment than simply taking the Powers at their own word.

MCC's ministry engages the organization fully in responding to the world's problems. But MCC stands in a church tradition that has at times accepted the accusation that it is taking inadequate responsibility for those problems. This tension is evident in MCC's life, expressed as different assumptions of how to be rightly engaged. Although perhaps not needing a "Mennonite social teaching" with the weight and precision of that in the Catholic tradition, Mennonites would do well to give more attention to articulating how the church and its members are to be involved in support of the social order while still remaining faithful to the Jesus path of peace. Combining the refusal to make the powers monolithic with the need to engage them supportively for the good of all could be the basis for a new sense of ethical guidance. The following points might be a start in this task:

- Christians confess that the church is the place to discern how God would have them live faithfully in this world, in support of the Powers when they fulfill God's will to sustain life, and in resistance when they rebel against life and seek to serve themselves at the expense of God's creation.
- Christians are called to relate to and participate in all areas of life and to actively support the Powers ordained by God to sustain life since, as Yoder says, "it is in this world that we have been preserved . . . ."[18]
- Resistance to the Powers, to the extent that they are fallen and in rebellion, cannot take the form of total rejection or all-out assault, because in their ordering function they remain part of God's good created order and, according to Wink, "there can be no spirit of Christ apart from its concreteness in the world."[19]

Recent Mennonite reflection and action has been influenced by political theology and liberation theology. Wanting to move beyond a withdrawal mindset, Mennonites concerned about social issues have tended to feel at home with an orientation that sees Jesus as siding with the poor and oppressed. This fits with a traditional understanding of discipleship as following Jesus' example, and is also, in its suspicion of reigning power structures, comfortable for those who have traditionally seen themselves as outsiders and not responsible for society. The methodology of social change that grows from this orientation can be described in the phrase of Jürgen Moltmann: "negating the negative."[20] Moltmann suggests that social change and a new future will grow from calling attention to, and working to do away with, that which is negative in society and especially in the political order. This can easily lead to a stance of political protest and suspicion of existing structures. By standing against something negative, so this logic goes, Christians create space for new developments to grow, for the reign of God to increase, so that a peace or social ministry moves from one negative to another, progressively beating back sin and fallenness.

It is easy to see how a traditional Mennonite suspicion of political power structures could lead to sympathy with this stance. MCC's positioning of itself and its work with marginalized and oppressed people and groups can tend to reinforce this propensity. The suggestion here, however, is that the Powers are both fallen and in rebellion, and also created for good; Wink's caution not to reject them or write them off is important.

One helpful suggestion is that of Gerald Schlabach, who calls for moving beyond the debate with Constantinianism.[21] Constantine, in Mennonite discourse, is shorthand for the church's fallen tendency to take on the role of ruler of society, and is a deviation from the ethics of Jesus. Rather than seeing the basic problem as one of keeping the church free from alliance with political structures of society, however, Schlabach says the important issue is how the church is to live with the blessings God gives her without oppressing, violating others, or hoarding. The question, put in Deuteronomic terms, is How do we live rightly in the land? rather than How do we stand against the negative? Schlabach's view will lead to questions on working with and resisting the Powers. But the bias will be for the church to be engaged constructively with the larger society which is her context.

Such an orientation toward positive engagement must be based in the church's identity as a community that shapes character and through its practices defines virtues. This is what gives the church the possibility to see in new ways and to find alternatives to the assumptions shaping much of society. For Hauerwas, this leads not to withdrawal but to engagement: "Christian commitment to nonviolence does not require withdrawal from the world and the world's violence. Rather it requires the Christian to be in the world with an enthusiasm that cannot be defeated. . . . We do that exactly by entering into the complex world of deterrence and disarmament strategy believing that a community nurtured on the habits of peace might be able to see new opportunities not otherwise present. For what creates new opportunities is being a kind of people who have been freed from the assumption that war is our fate."[22]

Implicit in Mennonite tradition has been the notion that the community, the church in its congregational and wider manifestations, shapes the lives and actions of believers. This notion, of the church as an alternative, as a contrast-society which provides a counter-performance to that of its context, is basic to Mennonite social thought. At times, these concepts have led to the dangers of withdrawal or of an assumed over-against-ness which negates the Powers without also understanding them as God's way of ordering the world for good. However, grounded in the understanding of the Powers sketched out above, these concepts can form the basis of a more clearly articulated understanding of how the church is to "live rightly in the land."

Some Implications for a Peace Church

Before taking a specific look at MCC praxis in the light of postmodern assumptions and an understanding of the Powers and the role of the church, we now raise several questions. These issues arise from MCC's work and reflection but are not confined to the more specific activities of MCC.

A Trinitarian View and the Wrath of God

A recurring issue for MCC in its partnerships with victims of injustice is the question of vengeance and the wrath of God. One thinker who has recently wrestled compellingly with this issue is Miroslav Volf. Volf writes out of his experience as a person from Croatia who has seen his homeland, Yugoslavia, fall apart, and who wrestles theologically with the inhumanity and violence of recent wars in that territory. He asks how to speak of God's love to those who have been violated and mistreated, and who call for vengeance.[23] His response is to hold up the need for reconciliation but also to remind readers of God's judgment and wrath. God is not limited by our human understandings of love, nurture, and forgiveness; God also punishes and seeks vengeance. But precisely because *God* is the one who judges, Volf suggests, we need not take up arms or wreak our own vengeance.

A core claim of the Christian faith is that Jesus the Christ is God – that he is one with God (three persons in one essence) – and that through him we know most clearly what God is like and how God chooses to work. This claim is basic to an ethic that sees peacemaking as central for Christians. Against a natural law ethic which finds warrants for Christian behavior in the created order, an Anabaptist view claims Christian ethics must be based in Jesus' life and teachings. To do otherwise would be to split apart the trinity – to set up a difference between Jesus the Son and God the Father, and to say it is the created order (and hence the Father/Creator) that has primacy for determining our ethic. Such reasoning underlies Mennonite and others' dismissal of the notion of natural law.

For Yoder, the Anabaptist claim is also a statement of the nature of God and the way God chooses to work in the world. Yoder sees the resurrection community of the cross as the definitive example of God's way of acting: through empowered weakness, through chosen suffering. This is the clue to who God is, what God is like. What does this mean for a response to Volf? If God chooses to work with patience, in weakness and suffering, are victims then left to the mercy of their victimizers? How then are we to think about God's wrath, or judgment, or vindication? Is God a pacifist? Does the fact that in Jesus we see God working through willing suffering mean that God ever works only that way? Yoder's formulation may be in danger of collapsing the trinity. Is there a way both to claim Jesus as normative and to avoid regarding God as limited? Can we join Yoder in affirming that the cross is a clue to the way God works in history, and in the requirement that Christians base their actions in the particular community which follows Jesus rather than in a generalized, universal natural law ethic, without losing a sense of God's otherness and freedom? The trinity affirms the congruence of Jesus with God, and also affirms the fact that God works variously.

This query is admittedly more theoretical than others we raise here, and less closely connected to the work of MCC. But MCC's engagement at many places in the world forces its staff to face questions such as those Volf raises. Reflection on them influences how partnerships are nurtured or how inter-Christian dialogue is conducted, when decisions on and justification for the use of violent force are being made. In these situations, MCC may call on the church in which it is based to understand and struggle with these dilemmas, and to provide careful and thoughtful reflection on the nature of the God we worship.

Being a Peace Church

Mennonite historian Perry Bush observes that in its work in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, MCC was caught in a conflict between peace and service.[24] Having gone to that country in response to a need for medical care, the agency was forced by the growing war into a kind of cooperation with the U.S. military presence that some felt compromised its witness. Bush's claim is that MCC's bias toward "service" endangered its stance for "peace." Bush is correct in seeing the Vietnam war as the source of change in how MCC and North American Mennonites talk about peace, a legacy we continue to live with. However, the split he assumes between service (defined as practical responses to human need) and peace (seemingly defined as a stance of protest against the war) is what is problematic. Setting up peace and service as a choice between divergent aims or methodologies has the effect of truncating the definition of peace, with unfortunate consequences.

In an earlier era, peace and service were held together. For those choosing to enter Civilian Public Service camps in World War II, such service was the primary way to register a commitment to peace and an unwillingness to kill those the government defined as enemies. MCC service in subsequent years was often seen as reaching out to "enemies" and thus as work for peace. The change for which the Vietnam war era conveniently stands as a symbol is a move into a different level of political engagement. Alongside a conviction that followers of Jesus could not kill, Mennonites joined forces with others in suggesting that the U.S. government should not be prosecuting that war. This parallels a move away from assumptions of withdrawal and a renewed vision of the church as needing to speak and work against wrongs in society.[25] It is certainly congruent with the view of the church as contrast-society set forth above. At the same time, in the way it was expressed, it tended to accept too willingly the theological categories of political/liberation theology, with a focus on negation replacing the need to build and to serve.

The problem arises when public witness in a negative mode becomes the definition of peace. As peace is defined as protest and separated from service, it becomes identified with a set of activities that are confrontational and negative in tone. When this happens, peace, rather than being a discipline for all growing out of the church's life of following Jesus, becomes too much the job of a specialized few who are willing to take on the really tough issues.

The move is away from being a "peace church" to having "peace fellowships" within the church.

Mending the split between peace and service, and thus seeing peace as something larger than protest and negation, is the challenge. Our sense is that a vision of the church as a community of virtue, based in an understanding of the Powers as created for good yet fallen, to be both worked with and resisted, can be helpful in strengthening the centrality of peace (broadly defined) for the life of the church. How might this be done? What new theological understandings and practical methodologies will form us as a place of collective discernment for right living in the world?

Fixing the Church

A corollary to the concern about separating peace from service is the tendency towards "fixing" the church. This tendency sees the church as an arena of mission rather than a locus of discernment. It appears to parallel the specialization of peace pointed to above. If peace is narrowly defined as responding to the tough issues, then almost by definition the majority of the church is in need of conversion, similar to an older renewal/revivalist ethos which saw regular, outside challenges and confrontations as necessary to keep the church faithful. The related temptation within a church agency is to focus on fixing internal dynamics before addressing the world's fallen and rebellious powers. This seems to reflect a confusion of mission with churchly discernment.

Ironically, the view of the church as a contrast-society can undergird this tendency. A stress on the church as an alternative to nurture new possibilities has often been read by Mennonites as a call to purity and perfection. The focus then can easily divert to rooting out sin within the church, or the church's agencies, as a prerequisite or even preference to witness in the larger society. If left unchecked, this leads to our being so busy putting our house in order that we seldom move beyond it. Our reflections suggest that a faithful response, when looking at God's purpose for the church's presence in the world, is more complex.

William Cavanaugh's stress on the Eucharist as counter-performance for the Catholic Church may be helpful here. He sees the function and act of worship as the core discipline for defining a new reality and community.[26] Too often, we suspect, Mennonites have focused on doing the defining and correcting, rather than on allowing themselves to be defined and corrected by an act of worship.

Some Implications for MCC Program

Our reflection thus far has focused on the intellectual categories and perhaps the emotional freight we carry when thinking about how Christians engage themselves in support of those things that sustain and protect life in this world. We have suggested that Mennonites have on occasion bought too extensively into the contemporary framework of both modernist realism and political/liberation theology. We have looked at some more recent thinking that can move us beyond this, and noted some agenda for further reflection. In this section we note some arenas for practical application of new thinking in the ministry of MCC, and its translation of Christian witness into the tangible, material world.

Work with Church and Faith Groups

Our reflection suggests a preference to work through and with the Christian church. The key reasons for this are theological, based on the conviction that the church is God's blessing to the world and should serve as a locus of discernment for right living. Anyone involved closely with the work of the church knows well that its human frailty is fully apparent. But for both confessional reasons (the church as the human, temporal body through which God works) and practical reasons – though human frailty is evident here, it is often a more humble frailty than in other walks of life – the church must remain the central point of reference for discovering an MCC ministry in all parts of the world.

Within this programmatic orientation, many practical issues arise, including complex questions about the role of MCC as an outside agency participating in the discernment of God's church in a given context. The church as it is at present sometimes does not reflect what MCC would prefer. How should MCC work alongside Christians who do not share its ethical stance on the use of violent force, equitable gender relations, or careful use of material resources? These are valid issues for inter-Christian dialogue, but such dialogue is based in an orienting, confessional stance which gives the church priority. For example, MCC may face a decision of whether to prefer a working relationship with a local church that holds to the justified use of violent force over a secular agency's peace program that may be more congruent with our pacifist orientation. In most cases, both relationships can and will be pursued simultaneously; nonetheless, we suggest the church preference should be a strong bias in MCC program when facing such choices.

Work in development, education, or relief as a compassionate Christian response to fellow humans has taken MCC into arenas where the Christian church is either not present or is only marginally present. What stance should MCC take toward other faith communities in these contexts? How can MCC programs undertake a healthy inter-faith dialogue? What level of priority should such relationships hold for MCC work?

In such situations MCC has at times fallen into the trap of seeing secular NGO or local government relationships as a way to avoid working with non-Christian local faith communities, thinking that secular contacts are safer or preferable. This is a trap in that it assumes secular entities are neutral ground in some way, rather than recognizing them as based in a particular narrative. If we accept, as a critique of modernism does, that secular institutions are no less belief-based than religious entities, it would seem appropriate that MCC aim over time to engage a Christian witness with its brothers and sisters oriented to faith, even if that faith is not Christian. To an extent this is happening. In much of the Middle East, MCC program works with Muslim agencies. The kind of philosophical framework we are here working with suggests more intentional pursuit of this policy throughout MCC program.

Planning of Program

How far does the theological orientation we are outlining have something to say about MCC's planning activity? In recent years the organization has placed increased emphasis on planning, especially a results-based style of program management. This is a necessary discipline as the organization becomes more diverse and wide-flung, and as constituents and donors ask for increased accountability. Attention to program planning and reporting within an agency such as MCC might be fruitfully informed by several of the emphases noted above.

In denying the existence of any central, overarching and rationally-determined grand narrative, postmodern thought seems to call into question the kind of planning we are talking about. Such a critique of modern assumptions gives credence to Hauerwas's call for "living out of control." He suggests that Christians must eschew any pretense to being able to determine the course of history. This goes along with the claim that God works through weakness and the cross rather than through domination or power politics, and that Christians are to follow this way. The assumption that humans can help to shape and determine the outcome of history, and can know the results of their actions, is what has led "realists" to see the support of state-led violence and war as "responsible." A caution against calculated realism is important. It need not negate the value of careful planning in MCC; however, it may suggest some cautions and directions in pursuit of this planning.

MCC's planning currently faces several challenges. The first concerns development activities referred to as capacity-building, where new interest in a results-based planning process is being reviewed and implemented. It is important for MCC efforts to join in culturally appropriate ways those organizations and institutions that have capacity to grow and become self-sustaining within a local context. Little is gained when an outside organization simply implements its own vision detached from what the immediate community wishes to support, or when it does not engage in both seeking and giving accountability for the resources and efforts involved, especially those it is responsible for introducing into the context. When an outside organization primarily implements an agenda to meet international terms or desires, this work seldom builds a capacity that can remain and become self-sustaining.

A second area pertains to the growing context of peace action and peace program responses. Whether in response to the disruption of war or to a need for community reconciliation systems, cultural values immediately become central to any negotiation or discussion. MCC has led in the development of a theoretical approach generally referred to as "elicitive," to indicate a foundational interest in finding locally-based procedures on which to build in any peace work. An elicitive approach is a methodological commitment to drawing from, or eliciting, peace practices from context and particular community/experience.

A third area of special challenge is program formed around activities to protect human rights or respond to human rights violations. Human rights, and the institutions that have grown up following the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" fifty years ago, come under close scrutiny today. Are these rights universal and to be expected of, even enforced on, all human societies, or are they binding only upon those who submit to their regulation? A modern world suggests the first, a postmodern the second. Currently Iran is sponsoring a discussion at the United Nations in New York called the "Dialogue of Civilization," which has raised the question of whether UN Human Rights procedures draw too much from Western, Christian thought and not enough from Islamic thinking. On a more local level, also, human rights can require discernment. Human rights are deeply enmeshed in cultural norms and customs, and can defy consensus. One area where this touches MCC work is the domain of gender relations. Male and female roles in society are culturally defined, and expectations that surround gender relations may not transfer from one culture to another.

In these areas of capacity-building, peacebuilding, and human rights, MCC has emphasized the participants and institutions in the particular context, and has tried to give secondary status to accountability to outside entities. This is what is meant by being "field-led" in programming. We support a clear and strong bias for community political and cultural processes, and we see them connecting to an appreciation for the particular over the universal in brokering program decisions and forming partnerships. This in no way diminishes the need for and legitimacy of careful negotiation and defining accountability, but it does place these activities and interests in a broader context for understanding how MCC workers participate in the lives of those with whom they interact. By remaining contextual, MCC's planning does not slip into the mindset of outside or universalistic control which a postmodern analysis suggests cannot connect with people and the way they work and change.

An acknowledgment of the contingent nature of history and a suspicion of assumptions about controlling the outcome of history will make MCC's approach to planning tentative and humble. It will also stress the importance of collecting the stories which grow from MCC's varied experiences and encounters. MCC is itself a narrative community, whose story is composed of many smaller stories, enacted in differing contexts. Our analysis suggests that MCC's work and future will not be determined by a grand scheme, laid out by design, but that in tracking those stories we will see a living, changing, richly-varied witness to MCC's work and priorities. Planning will then look for congruence with this orienting narrative, and for ways it is being continually shaped by a variety of contexts and relationships.

Advocacy

Public policy advocacy is a significant arena of MCC witness. In proportion to MCC's total ministry it remains a limited and marginal program engagement, but is nevertheless one that relies on significant thought. Although we do not suggest any specific redirection in these ministries, casting them in the light of theological and philosophical ideas pursued here will, we hope, inspire further reflection. Key understandings that guide this orientation are the following:

- Foucault emphasizes the dispersed nature of power. Power that fuels real and actual change is located in dispersed people and networks rather than in centralized structures.[27] This orientation implies that the church's public policy witness will take account of the widely-flung nature of power, and build on it, while at the same time resisting the modern assumption that power, and therefore change, resides only in centralized structures, primarily nation-states.

- The resurrection community of the cross provides a clue to the way God works in history. MCC's witness in public policy discussions is strongest when it is in touch with the values of the Christian "community of virtue,"[28] as it is this community that ultimately changes the world, as opposed to the seat of power in the nation-state, or in other power centers. We need to dismantle in our minds the popular modern notion that "Caesar is the privileged mover of history," and focus on a counter-history that deconstructs the realist picture of the way things are.[29]

- Yoder refers to the Christian relationship to the Powers, including the ordering role of central governments, as one of "revolutionary subordination."[30] We allude above to the Powers as part of God's good creation but fallen and in need of correction. A Christian's calling is to a counter-history, or contrast-society to redeem these Powers, to call them to authenticity or back to their God-ordained function. This ministry rests on two foundations: the Christian's centeredness in the church, where authentic virtues are discerned and practiced, and the confession that the Powers are intended to protect human life. A stance of revolutionary subordination recognizes that the Powers, while they do not lead or determine history, still have a role in sustaining life. Christian policy advocacy will maintain a position of respect and correction rather than assault or attack.

MCC's public policy advocacy will be most effectively focused by giving testimony to the contacts MCC has in dispersed-power networks, a process of ground-up change, rather than focusing on images of change from a top-down process. This has to a large extent been MCC's orientation and practice, following experience and a gut feel for social change. However, in light of the frequent and alluring tug to a more centralized preoccupation, it is important to be conscious of the theological and philosophical grounding for this ministry. MCC's advocacy work, given these understandings, will be seen as important but not ultimate. That is, MCC works with, calls to change, and relates to governmental structures while confessing that God's primary vessel for change and redemption is the church, the contrast-society.

Conclusion

We live today in a context of change, in which former certainties and assumptions are no longer sufficient. Twentieth-century "realist" ethics or political/liberation theological frameworks, and their influence on Mennonite understanding, need careful review. We call for the development of a more explicitly and carefully developed body of "Mennonite social teaching" which is based in traditional Mennonite theological thinking while also responding to the challenges posed by postmodern philosophical understandings. These understandings affect the life of the church, the way in which we conceptualize the church's role in the wider world, and the more specific and down-to-earth work of a church-related service agency such as MCC. Interacting with them is the task we face in discerning how to "live rightly in the land."

Notes

[1] Our title borrows a phrase from Gerald Schlabach, "Deuteronomic or Constantinian: What is the Most Basic Problem for Christian Social Ethics?" in Stanley Hauerwas, Chris K. Huebner, Harry J. Huebner, and Mark Thiessen Nation, eds., *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 450-68.

[2] We have edited a book that focused on this development through accounts and stories from around the world. This was done as a Historic Peace Church project for the World Council of Churches Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe in December 1998. See Robert Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr, eds., *Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking* (Scottdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1998).

[3] In August 1998 a conference at Bluffton College on "Anabaptism and Post-Modernism" persued many of these issues. There is much ongoing debate on how or where the language and lens of postmodernism is helpful. J. Lawrence Burkholder summarized some reservations in "Postmodern Dialectics," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 72.2 (April 1998), 321-26. See also the subsequent volume from that conference, Gerald Biesecker-Mast and Susan Bieseker-Mast, eds., *Anabaptists and Postmodernity* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press US, 2000).

[4] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Cambridge, MA / Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1990), 9.

[5] Summarized by David Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy, and Apocalypse* (Boulder, CO / Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1998), 58.

[6] John Howard Yoder, " 'Patience' as Method in Moral Reasoning: Is an Ethic of Discipleship 'Absolute'?" in *The Wisdom of the Cross*, 24-42.

[7] For a summary of Foucault's thoughts on history, and his proposal of "archaeology" and "geneology" in opposition to a totalitarian and controlling history, see Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*, 160-65.

[8] Summarized by Brad J. Kallenberg, "The Master Argument of MacIntyre's *After Virtue*," in Nancey Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation, eds., *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After McIntyre* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997),7-29.

[9] Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as* Polis: *From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 203.

[10] William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge, MA/ Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), 177-97.

[11] Summarized, for example, in Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 122-23.

[12] Arne Rasmusson, "Historicizing the Historicist: Ernst Troeltsch and Recent Mennonite Theology," *The Wisdom of the Cross*, 235.

[13] Summarized in Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*, 173-80.

[14] John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, cited by Rasmussen, "Historicizing the Historicist,"

in *The Wisdom of the Cross,* 246.

[15] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom,* 105, cited by Rasmussen, *The Church as* Polis, 367.

[16] See Rasmusson's insightful analysis of the acceptance by Hershberger of Troeltsch's categories. Hershberger's option then was to call for non-involvement in worldly structures, and the creation of the rural Mennonite community ideal as the way to retain a faithful people. "Historicizing the Historicist,"in *The Wisdom of the Cross,* 215-216.

[17] We use the word "responsible" as does Yoder, to mean being in touch with what we believe to be God's will for the world, or the way in which God works in history, rather than the definition used by the realists and followers of Troeltsch. These thinkers suggested that responsibility meant being willing to use force, and assumed that Jesus' ethic was not responsible or realistic for involvement in society.

[18] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus,* second edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994), 143.

[19] Cited in Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo,* 224.

[20] See Rasmussen's summary of Moltmann's thought, *The Church as* Polis, 131-32.

[21] Gerald Schlabach, "Deuteronomic or Constantinian: What is the Most Basic Problem for Christian Social Ethics?" in *The Wisdom of the Cross,* 450-68.

[22] Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society* (Minneapolis: 1985), 198, cited by Rasmusson, *The Church as* Polis, 317.

[23] Volf's most careful treatment of this issue is his book *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996). See also, from the South African context, Willa Boesak, *God's Wrathful Children: Political Oppression and Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

[24] Perry Bush, "Vietnam and the Burden of Mennonite History," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 17:2 (Spring 1999), 5-27.

[25] The Civil Rights movement in the U.S., during much of this same time, presented Mennonites with similar questions. We do not here follow up this movement or its significant influence on social ministry, but such a project could prove helpful in pursuing the questions we pose.

[26] William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist,* 205-81.

[27] See summary of Foucault's thought in Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo,* 217.

[28] We use "community of virtue" in the sense in which Alasdair MacIntyre describes it as the source of ethical practices in social relationships.

[29] See Toole's summary of Yoder's thought in *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo,* 212.

[30] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 162-92. Note that Yoder's "revolutionary subordination" only becomes change-oriented, and therefore meritorious, if undertaken voluntarily. A voluntary subordination is embraced when we believe it leads to true change and is in tune with the way God changes people and the world. It loses all focus and meaning, and any revolutionary potential, if it is not voluntary. Involuntarily subordination is not revolutionary, but simply oppressive and dehumanizing.

Literary Refractions

In her 1988 essay entitled “how i got saved,” Di Brandt evocatively described the southern Manitoba Mennonite world in which she grew up as “the real world of flower gardens & apple trees & green villages with names like Blumenort & Rosengart & Schoenwiese.”[1] In a “personal statement” that appeared in *Prairie Fire* in 1990, she wrote: “sometimes i long to go back to my grandmother’s garden, filled with gooseberries & strawberries & blackberries & crab-apples & rhubarb & red currants & blue currants & raspberries & blackberries. . .”[2] Her second collection of poetry, *Agnes in the sky*, also published in 1990, opens innocently enough with: “so this is the world & here i am,” and goes on to make references to “acid rain & the hole above Antarctica” and “the slow dying of the earth.”[3] Brandt’s powerful poetry has always demonstrated a richly-textured awareness of and concern for the natural world.

“What should we think,” she asked her largely female audience at a panel presentation on Canadian Literary Feminisms in Ottawa in 1998, “about the fact that while we were so enthusiastically exploring our new-found or newly remembered women’s histories & woman-centred lives, the world became a profoundly more polluted and dangerous place to live in. . . ?” Once, she reminded her listeners, we had “a deep reverence for animals and plants & the living earth. . . .”[4]

That Di Brandt the feminist should become Di Brandt the eco-feminist will not come as a surprise to regular readers of her work. What might be of particular interest to readers of *The Conrad Grebel Review* is Brandt’s comments in an interview with Cecile Brisebois Guillemot published earlier this year, where Brandt draws connections between the “‘pre-Renaissance’ Mennonite culture” of her southern Manitoba Mennonite home and the “traditional independent cultural and religious practices” of the Mennonites of the sixteenth century.[5]

What follows is a suite of poems that gives expression to Brandt’s well-developed interest in environmentalism and anticipates, perhaps, her probing investigations into the history of ecological communities and of Mennonites’ ecological thinking.

Hildi Froese Tiessen, *Literary Editor*

Notes

[1] Di Brandt, "how i got saved," in *Why I am a Mennonite: Essays on Mennonite Identity*, ed. Harry Loewen (Kitchener,ON.: Herald Press, 1988), 27.

[2] Di Brandt, "[untitled statement]," *Prairie Fire*: *A Special Issue on Mennonite Writing* 11,2 (Summer 1990), ed. Hildi Froese Tiessen and Dale Boldt, 183.

[3] Di Brandt, *Agnes in the sky* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1990).

[4] Di Brandt, "Shapeshifting Strategies for the New Millennium," *Contemporary Verse 2* 22,4 (Spring 2000), 63, 65.

[5] Di Brandt in Cecile Brisebois Guillemot, "*Wild Mother Dancing*: An Interview with Di Brandt," *Contemporary Verse 2* 23,4 (Spring 2001), 7.

Di Brandt is a graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (BTh), University of Toronto (MA), and University of Manitoba (BA, PhD). Her several volumes of poetry – questions i asked my mother *(1987)*, Agnes in the sky *(1990)*, mother, not mother *(1992)*, Jerusalem, beloved *(1995) – have been applauded by critics and nominated for numerous significant literary awards. Since 1997 she has taught creative writing and Canadian literature at the University of Windsor*.

Dreamsongs for Eden

Dear one, I saw you
riding the wind
under a blue blue blue sky
Here are some black days
ahead for you
Look! the tear in your red heart
reflects diamond shaped
shadows on the bright grass
Your spirit
among the leaping crickets
Hide it hide it!
under a grey stone

Someday the Silver Lady
will come for you
with starry hair
and a bowl of light
Watch for her, she carries
the moon in her belly
She will strike you blind
She will lift you
above clouds
to swirling galaxies

The dogs are sprouting
extra heads and howling
under the bridges
The bones of the drowned
children have washed down
the swollen red river
The strewn rose petals
have shrivelled to dust
Watch out! watch out!
Here is a long darkness
before She will save you

*

Fields of stubble
lying golden, blasted by sun
after the wheat harvest
Late August prairie soil
baked, cracked by heat
Mama, mama
the geese in the field
are tired
thinking of winter
the long flight home
the twisted golden rope
under oil slicks
dragging their broken
wings down
o! o! o!

*

Dear one, what have they
done to you
your golden head
rolling in the sand
Where are your arms
and legs now
your round belly
Your eyes have grown
big and luminous
Your eloquent mouth
silent
The ones who suffer
the ones who suffer
the ones who suffer
lying mutilated
washed up on beaches
These words I sing
for you
cracked, shivering
vibrating
in smog

*

He took you to the top
of the windswept bare hill
and looked around
There was silence around him
he thought it was only air
the binding took only a minute
You thought it was rope
for the new swing in the park
piercing your feet
with his awl
piercer pricker bodkin
and packing up
quickly, suddenly afraid
left you there

Eden, Eden,
you still have your eyes
Look at the sky
The ravens gathered
in the gnarled apple tree
They have come
to cry for you
with raucous tongues
their black wings flapping

*

You who will grow up
without Monarch butterflies
or salmon or wild bees
for whom
cicadas and fireflies
will be quaint
electronic myths
whose children will know
the words allergy
asthma panic disorder
more intimately than
roses or celestial or sea

O do not forgive us
for worshipping death
for crippling you
with terror
Eden, little grandmother
keeper of our hope
The grief of earth
gasping panting
exhausted
under cement
our great failure
our open wound

*

Let me paint
dear angel
this fable for you:
a father's face
in the dark corner
of the rose coloured room
glowing
over the tiny bed
of his firstborn
beloved, you
His soldier's heart
opening into great gasps
of pity and fear
his conqueror's dream
of guns dissolving
tremors in sand

How he tossed you
lightly in air
and caught three year old
you laughing
among the leaping
leopards and crows
O he was the lover then
bowing before your
beauty and golden haired
childish wild joy

And then his heart turned over
and hardened
His blood throbbed clumsily
through parched ventricles
through clogged veins
blue purple magenta
And the father in him
reared up on grey hoofed

legs flailing against
bit and bridle
No! No!

And his sensitive fingers
turned to steel
his laughter
to barked decrees
crowning himself
iron-fisted
against his own two-year-old
pubescent grief
king

Is this love
is this love
this twisted clogged
river of molten gold
choking in chemical
saturated clay?

Even now, even now
sweet one
he hearkens after you
beneath cocked guns
Listen, you can hear
a heart sobbing
through cracked
grey cement

Nine long years
you will swallow
his pride his power
his twisted grief
little one, dearest
before you can
spit him out!

*

Here is a secret:
when you turn thirteen
go to the corner
of the yard at midnight
where the grass grows
against the fence
unreached by the lawn mower
under the crab apple tree
There She will greet you
with your shattered heart
in her cupped hands
She will pour its silver red
shards gently
into your tender chest
O listen then
to the spheres turning
in the dark sky
echoing through
the great Nothing
your crystalline song

*

Go then to the corner
of the yard at midnight
where the grass grows
against the fence
under the crab apple tree
unreached by the lawn mower
There She will greet you
She has saved your broken heart
in her cupped hands
silver red shards
There She will pour
your spirit
like music
back into you

*

In rippled sun drenched sand
I will wait for you
There I will gather
dates for you and wash
your pierced feet
under palms
Eden, dear one
your sutured heart
your curls swept by wind

Responses

Response by the author, Duane K. Friesen, to Gordon Kaufman's review of *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City*

I appreciate the substantive review of my book, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City* by Gordon Kaufman in *The Conrad Grebel Review* (Spring 2001). Of his own theological approach in his book*, In Face of Mystery,* Kaufman states:

> Since theology is principally concerned with what is ultimately mystery about which no one can be an authority, with true or certain answers to the major questions – I suggest that the proper model for conceiving it is not the lecture (monologue); nor is it the text (for example, a book): it is rather, conversation. We are all in this mystery together; and we need to question one another, criticize one another, make suggestions to one another, help one another. (64)

It is in this spirit that I would like to respond to a number of issues Kaufman raised in his review.

1. To whom is the book addressed? Kaufman assumes that *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers* is addressed to Mennonites. While I am grateful for his compliment that it is "good to see a Mennonite theologian take up this exceedingly significant subject," his mistaken assumption is revealed in the rest of that sentence when he says, "[it is] a subject crucial for all of today's Mennonites if *we are to survive* (my emphasis) as a distinctive Christian movement." He assumes that an "Anabaptist theology of culture" is for Mennonites, as if "we" owned this tradition. But my book is not about Mennonites, for Mennonites, or about Mennonite survival. It is indeed deeply influenced by the author's Anabaptist heritage. But the point of the book is not to set out a "Mennonite" position, but rather to draw upon the non-Constantinian alternative vision of church history (from Jeremiah and the Waldensians to

Oscar Romero and Martin Luther King) to set out an ecumenical vision for the larger church in North America. The vision set out in the book was particularly inspired by East German Christians (largely from within the Lutheran tradition) who used the Jeremiah model in the 1950s and '60s to respond to Marxism. I feel that Kaufman keeps me in the Niebuhrian "sectarian" box, whereas the book is an argument about how to break out of that box.

2. Is the book flawed because it is still too traditionally "Mennonite?" Kaufman's underlying assumption, I suspect, leads him to make two particularly Mennonite points: (1) that the title of my first chapter, "Christians and Aliens," is a "not too promising, but typically Mennonite, dualistic formulation"; and (2) that my whole program may be "based too largely on a nostalgic vision of the good old days when Mennonites really could live in – and could decisively socialize their children into – the alternative culture and life of their rural communities." Kaufman seems not to have noticed that what I have set out is increasingly being adopted by mainline Protestant leaders and theologians who recognize that Christians need an alternative vision of the church that "forms" persons into an alternative set of practices that can have staying power and have an impact on the larger society. Let me mention several examples I draw on extensively in the book: Larry Rasmussen (Reinhold Niebuhr Chair at Union Theological Serminary), who wrote *Moral Fragments and Moral Community*; Walter Brueggemann (Calvinist tradition; Professor at Columbia Theological Seminary), who wrote *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*; and Martin Luther King. Cornel West (quoted on page 307) says of King: "Let us not forget that the great American prophetic figure of our time, Martin L. King Jr., was a child of the black church – an individual product of the major institutional product of black people in this country." Robert Bellah (et al.) argues that the church must become an alternative "community of memory" to counter the corrosive individualism of American culture. Bellah and his co-authors in *Habits of the Heart* point to examples of the church in modern American urban culture where such a vision is being put into practice. Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas are in this stream as well when they argue for the establishment of communities of virtue grounded in a narrative tradition (though I criticize Hauerwas for not emphasizing the church's prophetic mission outside its boundaries). My own view is that the Mennonite churches that seem most to embody this vision are not living in rural enclaves but in urban centers like Kansas City, Los Angeles, Toronto, Seattle, Chicago, Denver, and Winnipeg. I have learned a great deal from Kaufman, and I acknowledge that in my book. However, the position from which I suspect he is responding to me grows out of his minimalist ecclesiology. I do not think he adequately considers the church as one of the primary institutions of moral formation as a base for engaging the larger culture. Ecclesiology grounded in an embodied Christology and a trinitarian God is integral to a theology of culture, but Kaufman gives no attention to these chapters in his review. Thus I am not sure that he has fully understood my position.

3. What does it mean for the church to be central in the engagement of the larger culture? Kaufman fails to understand the implications of my ecclesiology for how one engages the larger culture. He does not grasp how my view of the church "could ever be a model for the wider society . . . other than some kind of theocracy seeking to rule the world." He acknowledges that I do not intend this, given my recognition of religious pluralism. Kaufman misses a key part of the argument where I discuss the concept of "analogical imagination" in chapter 7, "The Dynamics of Dual Citizenship." A Christian understanding of citizenship is based on *two* principles: (1) a model of the church which serves as a vision for the "good society"; and (2) A commitment to participation in the larger culture through a process of analogical thinking that seeks to "translate" that vision into applications to a pluralistic society. I suggest a number of normative axioms that might apply to the larger society based on this vision such as religious liberty, nonviolent conflict resolution, democratic structures of decision making, and an understanding of economic justice that respects the dignity of all persons because it is grounded in a corporate vision of the church where the well-being of the whole body entails the practice of mutual aid. I am impressed by how persons in the mainline Protestant traditions have affirmed this analogical process. For example, Alan Geyer (Methodist theologian and former editor of *Christian Century*) and Donald Shriver seek to apply the concept of forgiveness to the political arena (see references to their work on page 160 of my book).

4. How is our particular identity as Christians in a pluralistic world of other faiths related to the universal claims of Christ upon us as Christians? Kaufman asks how I can affirm the "universality" of Christ in a Christian vision of life and at the same time "respect difference and not attempt to absorb the other into our own perspective" (262). It would help if he accurately quoted my position without taking my more nuanced wording out of context. I state: "Genuine faith entails commitment to that which is regarded as ultimate." Kaufman uses part of that sentence, "genuine faith entails commitment to," and links it to a phrase four sentences later where I am not stating my position but introducing several biblical quotations with "the universal claims of Christianity." By joining these two phrases Kaufman is stating my position as "Genuine faith entails commitment to . . . the universal claims of Christianity." It seems to me there is a significant difference between taking a "witness" to Christ as the ultimate point of reference in a dialogical process of engagement with other religious views, and making a universal claim for the absoluteness of the Christian faith. I am simply trying to state honestly and directly what any person of religious faith cannot avoid: the dialectical tension involved in making a commitment to a vision of life that entails universal claims (or else it would not be ultimate), and at the same time acknowledging that we "confess" that ultimate commitment from a perspective that is limited and particular.

In his book, *In Face of Mystery*, Kaufman has his own universal normative vision for engaging different religious views: open-ended conversation and dialogue. Yet this very vision of life arises out of the particular circumstances of history: a liberal enlightenment view of inquiry, the ideal of a modern university. These concepts of open-ended inquiry and tolerance are not universally shared by all human beings. They appear only at a particular time and place in history. It also makes a world of difference as to the content of Christology (which Kaufman does not discuss in his review). The kenotic Christology of servant love in Philippians 2 suggests not a triumphal, arrogant engagement with the other, but a dialogical process of loving relationship that entails repentance, humility, and openness to listening and learning from the other and being changed by the other. I am convinced that commitment to a Christology of an embodied Jewish Jesus who taught and practiced love of enemies and the other is not an impediment to dialogue in a pluralistic world.

It is rather a more adequate and honest basis of engagement than so-called universal reason, which in fact is another type of historical particularity.

5. How adequately is the Western philosophical tradition treated? Kaufman is critical of my last chapter, "Philosophers, Christian Faith and Human Wisdom," because there is "no discussion here of particular philosophers or the important place held by the philosophical tradition in Western Culture." He does not acknowledge that I set as my goal at the beginning of this chapter to consider a much broader understanding of the word "philosophy" – its root meaning, "the love of wisdom." This includes not just the Western philosophical tradition, but practical wisdom, empirical wisdom, and the wisdom that can be learned from other religious traditions. His criticism is especially misleading in as much as he does not consider the extensive discussion of the Western philosophical tradition throughout my book (and also in the extensive endnotes): (1) the engagement with Plato, Justin Martyr, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Whitehead, Rawls, Walzer, Durkheim, Freud, Otto, Hick, Tillich, Barbour, Murphy, Lakotas, MacIntyre, Wittgenstein, and others; and (2) the engagement with topics such as definitions of culture, epistemology, the nature of religion, historical consciousness, the meaning of the Enlightenment, natural law, postmodernism, process categories, dualism, the human/nature relationship, aesthetic theory, philosophy of science, political philosophy, moral formation, criteria of truth, relativism, and other topics.

6. What is the role of the Bible? In his analysis of chapter one, Kaufman wonders what "authority" the Bible has in my theology. Let me call attention to my discussion of how the Bible is authoritative in my theological method (80-81). I might add here that, as we construct theology for our time (I have been influenced significantly by Kaufman's method), we need to do so in continuity with the tradition. A modern house in tune with contemporary architecture will still have many features in common with houses built centuries earlier, such that we will recognize the contemporary house as a house. I find biblical scholarship very engaging and a rich resource for the contemporary construction of a theology of culture. As I say in summarizing H.R. Niebuhr, "revelation . . . is not contrary to reason, but is the way in which the story of God's action makes our lives intelligible" (80). The Jeremiah model ("seek the peace of the city," Jeremiah tells the exiles) is a compelling model because it "makes sense," not simply because it is in the Bible and therefore authoritative for us. Also, given the ecumenical agenda of my book, we must search for common metaphors and stories that can link the church in many lands and cultures. From a strictly pragmatic point of view, there is little future in a theological construction that speaks to a narrow academic elite but has cut the roots to the historical tradition of the ecumenical church.

7. Does the book cover adequately crucial topics? A theology of culture can only be suggestive. It takes many of us to engage the wide range of issues we are confronted with. I acknowledge that my discussion of science is much too brief, and the significance and impact of technology needs to be taken up. Consider, for example, the topic of scientific knowledge in genetics and our growing technological capacity to use that knowledge either for good or ill. To engage that issue adequately would require a book in its own right. Or, consider the impact of global market capitalism, a topic for another book. I hope that my book suggests an approach to this topic (through both where I got it right and where I did not) that will stimulate a wide ranging discussion among many people who desire the Christian faith to contribute to the "peace of the city."

Book Reviews

Lydia Neufeld Harder. *Obedience, Suspicion and the Gospel of Mark: A Mennonite-Feminist Exploration of Biblical Authority*. Studies in Women and Religion/Études sur les femmes et la religion 5. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998.

The genesis of this book was "as an experiment in feminist thought"(ix). Born out of Harder's personal struggle in the context of the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith tradition while embracing the challenges of feminist theological writing, this volume explores the nature of biblical authority.

Both a critical and a constructive model of theology are incorporated here. Harder's discourse embodies a constructive process consisting of moments of critical reflection followed by a creative moment. This book begins with a discussion of methodological strategies and theological focus. The methodological approach and particular choices made by Harder are placed in the context of the hermeneutical discussion on biblical authority.

Chapters two and three deal descriptively with biblical authority in the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith tradition and with feminist theological thought. John H. Yoder and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza are selected as conversation partners, because both scholars come from "communities of interpretation that agree on the importance of the relationship between discipleship and the process of biblical interpretation"(8). Yoder's writings are examined because they provide a normative language of discipleship for many Mennonites. Schüssler Fiorenza's work is an example of contextual biblical interpretation of discipleship from a feminist hermeneutic community.

The focus shifts with chapter four, where attention is paid to Biblical authority in the language of the Gospel of Mark. Harder is committed to wrestling with the discipleship tradition in the Gospel of Mark which she identifies as creative power and subversive power. With this shift in focus, Harder attempts to reread the biblical text while rooted in her Mennonite feminist experience, thus maintaining a dynamic relationship between the biblical text and the practices of the community.

Harder presents a thorough and extensive theological and biblical analysis, exploring Anabaptist-Mennonite theology, feminist theologies, and exegesis from the Gospel of Mark. The detail work is expansive and commendable. Arguments can be made against the conversation partners of Yoder and Schüssler Fiorenza as adequately representative. However, the beauty, art, and skill of the writing is most evident in the panoramic view that this successful experiment takes.

The strength of the book lies in the vibrant "interweaving of theological convictions and interpretative practices"(x). As the analysis moves with broad strokes to two particular communal discourses (Anabaptist-Mennonite and Christian feminist), and to two individual voices within those discourses (Yoder and Schüssler Fiorenza), the reader experiences living with the tension and embracing polarities alive within this experiment.

Harder's use of feminist thought invites participation and ongoing development. Harder's methodology of wrestling, creativity, critique, construction, intermingling, and connectedness addresses communities committed to discerning God's word. The author's theological method is not a new approach, it is grounded in feminist thought. However, it is unique that the book considers a hermeneutic of obedience and a hermeneutic of suspicion by focusing on the common theological concept of discipleship.

Harder's personal voice permeating this book is a vulnerable act, a gift for theological and biblical writing: "Because I too am easily blind to my own use of biblical interpretation to justify my own actions, I must open myself to the critique of an enlarged hermeneutic community. At the same time, I will listen to the text as closely as I can, acknowledging both the strength and limitations of my context. Neither obedience nor suspicion alone will define my approach to the Bible"(95).

A book that seeks to illuminate a critical and creative theological and biblical hermeneutic of discipleship deserves serious attention. It may be particularly crucial for Mennonites who have emphasized communities of commitment and discernment, but who often hesitate to enter circles of dialogue with other hermeneutical communities.

Eleanor Epp-Stobbe, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, Voices for Non-Violence, Winnipeg, MB

Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity. Vol. I: The First Thousand Years*. Ottawa: Novalis, 2000.

As Mennonites, we focus on the Gospels, then jump over the next fourteen hundred years to our Anabaptist roots in the early sixteenth century. Readers of Mary Malone's study will be introduced to the fascinating period in the history of Christianity that falls outside of the scope of Mennonite history. A feminist historian from an Irish Catholic background, Malone probes the New Testament scriptures and the writings of the early Church fathers, showing how Christian theology has shaped women's place in the church. Focusing on the realities of women's experiences rather than on prescriptions about who women should be, she revises our understanding of the "'good news' for women" as it evolved during Christianity's first millennium (19).

Malone stresses that she is not writing church history but rather a history of Christianity. She is not creating a metanarrative outlining a particular history and creed, but she is deliberate about writing to a wide audience. Nor is she attempting to write a comprehensive history of women; instead she wishes "to redirect our historical attention . . . to offer as much as possible of the truth about women in the first millennium of Christianity"(37). The analysis of gender, or "the arrangements of systems of equality and inequality within Christianity," is thus a particular focus (41). A second feminist concern is "the recovery of voice," as Malone attempts to put women back into history to validate the experiences of contemporary women (31).

In nine chapters, Malone deftly weaves story and analysis together. Women's voices emerge from the shadows of history – disciples, martyrs, deaconesses, widows, abbesses, missionaries. As we might expect, Mary, the mother of Jesus, plays an important role. But so do other disciples – Mary Magdalen, Salome, Joanna, Susanna, and the nameless woman who anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume. Early church leaders like Prisca, Juna, Chloe, Lydia, Nympha, and Phoebe are recognized in their roles as prophets, church leaders, and apostles. Why have these leaders been overlooked, Malone asks. What "unfinished agenda" still needs to be addressed?

Later chapters lift from the silences women with whom readers may be even less familiar. The martyrdom of Perpetua, from the north African city of Carthage in the third century, along with her slave-girl Felicitas, illustrates the strength of young women who fearlessly exercised their personal power; they claimed a direct relationship with God in a patriarchal culture that gave that authority only to clergy. Later, readers are introduced to fourth-century ascetics such as Marcella and Paula, and abbesses, for instance Clothilda, Radegund, and Hilda, who developed monasteries. Finally, Pope Joan, whose two-year papacy in the mid-ninth century has long ago been relegated to myth, is highlighted in the long line of Christian women worthy to be remembered.

With the stories of these women and many others, Malone re-imagines Christian history. She deconstructs "the volumes of advice" church leaders have written to instruct women "on how to fulfill their allotted roles as repentant daughters of Eve" (28). Taking a new look at the texts, she examines issues feminist historians are raising. How has patriarchal marriage silenced women? How has the fear of women's bodies shaped Christian thought? Who claims authority? How does language suppress women? "Who acts and speaks for God?" (101)

If one can find any fault with this book, it is that it attempts to do too much. With the many threads of history and theology Malone has woven together, a reader would expect to find areas that could use further development and analysis. For instance, recent scholarship re-interpreting the original Greek suggests that Malone's views of Paul may be too traditional.[1] But this is only a minor criticism.

For Mennonite readers, this volume provides a wonderful companion to Arnold Snyder and Linda Huebert Hecht's *Profiles of Anabaptist Women.*[2] To use historian Gerda Lerner's words, Malone's study offers a further "corrective" to the "selective forgetting" that has characterized history.[3] As humans we need our history to validate our experiences. Works like this one not only broaden our understandings of the history of Christianity, they provide a script for contemporary women to follow as they live their lives in as fully a human way as possible. This book helps to fill in the gaps and provides an important step towards "the new history of Christianity" Malone envisions.

---

[1] See for instance Loren Cunningham and David J. Hamilton with Janice Rogers, *Why Not Ordain Women? A biblical study of women in missions, ministry and leadership* (Seattle, 2000).

[2] Arnold Snyder and Linda Huebert Hecht, *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century*

Reforming Pioneers (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996).

[3] Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Lucille Marr, Co-pastor, Montreal Mennonite Fellowship, Montreal, PQ

Willard M. Swartley, *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*. Studies in Peace and Scripture, 4. Telford, PA: Pandora Press US / Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000.

This book addresses René Girard's theory about violence and religion, which claims that the Judaeo-Christian tradition in general, and the NT gospels in particular, identify the way for humanity to move from violence to peace. The book's fourteen chapters and its introduction by the editor emerge from a conference held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in June 1994. Most of the chapters reproduce the main conference presentations; some were commissioned later or developed from conference participation, and the last chapter is a reflection by Girard himself, who was absent from the event. The editor is a highly-respected senior NT scholar, whose books (e.g., *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*, 1983) have modelled balanced, informed scholarship. *Violence Renounced* belongs in all seminary libraries, and on the bookshelves of those captivated by Girard's theory.

The theory is well known. Girard has repeated it, with minor modifications, in eight books and dozens of articles and responses over the last thirty years (the groundbreaking book was *Violence and the Sacred*, French 1972, English 1977), and scholars have promoted and critiqued it in scores of publications and conferences. Girard argues that violence emerges from humans wanting what others want (imitation, or "mimesis"). This primal urge needs to be kept in check if societies are to survive. Long ago humans discovered that projecting responsibility for this violence onto someone else (scapegoating) relieved societal tension. Out of this realization emerged religion, with its gods and scapegoating rites keeping the cycle of violence in check but not getting rid of it. Girard goes on to argue that Jesus, for the first time in history, revealed the true root of violence (mimesis) and its result (scapegoating). By openly showing himself to be the innocent victim Jesus pointed humanity toward a new paradigm of peace: understanding what we've been doing to one another for centuries, and why, should lead us to change. The solution to end human violence, Girard believes, can be found in the gospels.

What is perhaps most surprising about Girard's theory is that it has been taken so seriously. It is a universal theory about religion developed by a literary theorist with no academic training in religion, anthropology, or history; a theory that focuses on the New Testament gospels, presented by someone with no grounding in biblical studies or theology; a theory that studies only a few elements of Western thought, yet reduces all the world's cultures to a single origin and purpose; a theory that unabashedly argues for the supremacy of the Christian revelation; and a theory concerning the biblical view of peace that shows virtually no awareness of studies by Christians directly concerned by peace questions.

But Girard has struck a chord. Many, like James Williams, one of the contributors to this volume, openly delight in a theory that in a multicultural world forthrightly states the supremacy of the Christian revelation. Others are attracted to a larger theory of culture that concerns itself with nonviolence. Most have sought to apply and correct the theory. On the whole, scholars of religion have tended to be dismissive of the theory, Christian theologians cautious, and biblical scholars curious.

Violence Renounced presents mostly Mennonite biblical scholars thoughtfully inquiring about the relevance of Girard's view. The tone throughout is polite, and the appreciation is usually positive (even Sandor Goodhart, a Jewish studies scholar, suggests only minor modifications to a theory that many have called supersessionist). The reader will find clear though at times repetitive summaries of Girard's view, with efforts made to underline its importance (e.g., James G. Williams, regarding servanthood), to identify the parts of it that are consistent with theological and biblical scholarship (e.g., Ted Grimsrud on the gospel portrayals of Jesus' death, Charles Mabee on Deuteronomy), and to suggest how it could/should be adapted (Gordon H. Matties on Joshua, Robin Collins on atonement, Rebecca Adams on peacemaking in the modern world). A particular concern is with Girard's scapegoating of sacrifice: his Jesus "saves," not by taking on our sins (acting as a scapegoat), but by pointing out that such a view is destructive. Several contributors (e.g., Marlin Miller regarding atonement in general, Michael Hardin and Loren L. Johns regarding the nature of sacrifice in *Hebrews*) argue that any properly Christian view of sacrifice and atonement must take into account the sacrificial nature of Jesus' death.

The reader will also find other sharp critiques of Girard's work, regarding its totalistic claims (especially Paul Keim's article on an application to the Gilgamesh story and, Jim Fodor's on the Trinity), biblical claims (e.g., Swartley on discipleship and suffering), and theological claims (e.g., Fodor). This book explores, expands, and challenges Girard's theory. The challenges are substantial.

Michel Desjardins, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON

Waldemar Janzen, *Exodus*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000.

The Believers Church Bible Commentary series was instituted "for all who seek more fully to understand the original meaning of scripture and its meaning for today" (11). This commentary succeeds admirably in that purpose. Waldemar Janzen has been a teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend to many Mennonite scholars, pastors, and students of the Bible. It comes as no surprise that he has written a careful, clear, and thoughtful study.

Like other volumes in the series, this commentary is set up in a pattern of three sections. "Explanatory Notes" offers an overview of each passage, with background information, brief word studies, and general notes to aid understanding. "The Text in Biblical Context" relates the individual passage to other biblical passages and themes. "The Text in the Life of the Church" provides theological reflection relating the Exodus story to more recent events and concerns. In addition, Janzen gives a set of brief essays, dealing with topics such as "Pharaoh's Hardness of Heart" (452-54) and "Yahweh War" (463-65), to present additional background or theological reflection on questions that arise repeatedly in a study of Exodus.

Perhaps the best word to describe this commentary is masterful. Janzen provides both detailed study of the ancient world and contemporary relevance, both ancient history and contemporary theology, always with deep respect for the text. Masterful, however, also describes the most problematic aspect of his commentary. Janzen describes the movement of Israel toward a "covenant to their legitimate Master, God" (24). The relation of Master/servant (slave?) is also carried forward by implication to the Bible itself where, within the canonical method, the Bible becomes our (sole?) Master in relating God to us. Janzen has "mastered" Exodus for us, firmly guiding readers toward a particular understanding of the text and its God. While he may argue that he has attempted to be a faithful *servant* to the text and to God, his continued push toward only one understanding of the text suggests otherwise. With all these masters before us, our own confidence as participants in the hermeneutical community is not enhanced. Rather, our choice appears to be submission or rebellion. In a commentary on Exodus, this is very ironic. Further, Janzen is not willing to analyze who benefits from this particular style of mastery. There is little engagement with voices that are excluded or marginalized by it.

Let me give an example. In numerous places Exodus says the land toward which Israel is moving is already populated, by the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, et al., and God deems these people expendable in the desire to find that land (3:8, 17; 13:5, 11; 23, 28; 33:2; 34:11). But Janzen spends little time wondering about this genocidal god, or asking what it would be like to read these passages as a modern Palestinian. He does raise issues of genocide in relation to the Egyptian oppression of Israel, stating that "the biblical text . . . should evoke in us an abhorrence . . . of any hostility toward a person or people based on race, nationality, religion or other group membership" (43), but apparently this does not apply to those whom God deems expendable. Even the essay entitled "Promised Land" (455-57) does not wonder about the fate of these unchosen people. This is not surprising, as Janzen's "canonical method" allows only for questions that Exodus chooses to raise and excludes questions left out of the biblical worldview. (For a study of the canonical method, see Mark G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis?* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], especially 156-67.)

In the end, it is Janzen's reliance on the canonical method that most limits the usefulness of this commentary. Readers who are mystified by the

Old Testament and who seek assistance in finding its contemporary relevance will find much in this volume that is helpful. Readers who are ready to move beyond the safe answers of tradition will find it disappointing in that respect.

Wes Bergen, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS

Mary Swartley and Rhoda Keener, eds., *She Has Done a Good Thing: Mennonite women leaders tell their stories*. Scottdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1999.

This book is filled with engaging stories of women who have succeeded in making a difference in the Mennonite church. There are twenty-eight stories all, each one an autobiographical sketch of a woman's call to ministry. The stories are organized into four categories: theologians, pastors, educators, and administrators. The editors give priority to telling the stories of women born before 1950. Each story is written with its own unique flavor, and there is a richness in the diversity of voices. Some women speak in a factual narrative style, others use metaphor and simile to describe their journey. I found myself moved at many points; the humility, courage, and humor of the women inspired me. Their faithfulness to God shone through their words.

Yet, in spite of all these strengths, the book left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction. I was left wondering about the painful subtext of a volume such as this, which for me reads, "She would have done a good thing, but they wouldn't let her." There are only glimmers of this subtext, such as when Lydia Harder writes of her mother's courage: "I wept because of the many gifts that she had, which had not been used in the church. I wept for myself, admitting that I longed for affirmation from my faith community" (28).

This is not to say that the stories are simply cheerful accounts that skim over obstacles. On the contrary, they do tell about painful barriers. There are references to self-doubt, disapproval of parents, or lack of confidence. What the book lacks is an introduction that contextualizes the stories and points to the connections between them. Rather than an introduction, there is a section called "Vision for this Book." It shows how the book was compiled, but basically it adds another story.

Story is a relatively safe way to share radical change; people don't like to argue with other people's stories. It becomes much more controversial to compare stories and use words that help to make meaning from them. This book does not want to be controversial. I suggest, however, that there is a place in 2001 for saying the word "sexism" without feeling embarrassed or worried that someone might be offended. Should the word "patriarchy" be buried on the nineteenth page? There is a time to acknowledge that all these women were influenced by feminism (a term rarely used in this book). Mennonites may have been culturally insulated, but feminism has affected all of our lives.

Of course, this book's primary purpose is to celebrate women's gifts in the church. And the book does feel like a celebration. However not to explicitly address the barriers to how these gifts were received in the church implies that women who did not "succeed" in ministry like these women were either not called by God or not faithful enough.

My critique, no doubt, stems from my membership in a different generation than that of the women in *She Has Done a Good Thing*. For women who are struggling with leadership in the church today, this book would be stronger with an introduction that looks for the meaning between the stories.

Carol Penner, Vineland, ON

Phyllis Pellman Good, with photographs by Jerry Irwin. *Amish Children*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2000.

Amish Children collects more than 150 color photographs by American professional photographer Jerry Irwin. The photographs, printed on high-quality paper, are an act of homage to a particular "old order" people and what they can be said to "represent." The photographs portray a world thriving beyond whatever is left of mainstream's cultural borderlines in North America. Irwin's camera breaches the space that separates Amish customs from "our" customs, from what the text calls the "larger world." Except for the image of a train (146), the camera ignores that larger world, leaving even Amish visitors to Niagara Falls (97) isolated, detached, seemingly self-sufficient.

Gliding in essay form alongside the photographs is the primary written text by Phyllis Pellman Good. Good is solid and sensitive, sympathetic and savvy, as a reader of Amish culture. She weaves a body of generous affirmation and earnest, even adoring, appreciation around the world of the pictures. She offers, too, a gentle interrogation of troubles Amish children might encounter when they move through adolescence, but these troubles (she assures us) are largely contained by a God-fearing, work-oriented, nature-sensitive, and government-condoned community that offers distinctive patterns of consolation and support for its members who, at the end of the day, "will be fed bountifully!" (32). Good quotes helpfully from scholarly and community sources. For example, an Amish leader observes that "'the lunch pail is one of the great threats to the Amish community'" (7). His words are part of the shower of insights that Good provides, in this case pointing to a destabilizing technology that gives Amish men the means to take jobs at ever greater distance from the nurture of their families and homes.

Interspersed throughout the volume are succinct statements, mainly by Amish children, taken from *Family Life* and *Blackboard Bulletin*, two productions of Pathway Publishers in Aylmer, Ontario. The statements are lyrical, fresh, wise. They playfully convey a sense of sacred piety in the lives of these people. The book has seven chapters (Belonging, "Thinking" Amish, Going to School, Learning to Work, Having Fun, "Going with the Young People," Joining the Church), and includes a short but helpful bibliography.

It is the pictures that draw our attention first. They start with the image of a boy on the front cover, with his twisted suspender (his eyes and body language suggesting perhaps mischief, perhaps wisdom beyond years, maybe reflective detachment, or wariness, or even irony). The photographs are carefully crafted as art objects. They are also strong as documentary. Indeed, the surfaces of the Amish world invite a documentary approach. However, these pictures' fundamental commitment to an edenic vision of people rooted in "pastoral places" (47) inevitably limits their role as documentary.

That is, the photographs not only depict a world but also construct a world and construct our response. Editing and framing, composition and color, texture and detail reach out to us, and give us a direct, warm, unequivocal message. The pictures endorse our awe as a way of seeing (and by the same token endorse a way of being seen). They reveal mainly a rural Pennsylvania where, in the magic of this universe, even automobiles do not intrude. The images (with exceptions such as those where a delightful self-consciousness hints at the act of production) draw little attention to how they have been produced, or how they have come to serve as representations of both private and public moments of a culture, the public tidily mirroring the private without hint of contradiction. It seems as though one level of private meaning can be enacted in a sustained way in the public realm. We are left to ponder whether the production process tends to be limiting or liberating.

Irwin's superb camera seems to dream a kind of godly wholeness on earth. The ingredients of Amish culture are used to utter with clarity the rudiments of life as a journey, replete with images of endless renewal. Irwin's camera lets the children (and any of their elders who might appear) perform a drama of cultural simplicity and social continuity, of gently spontaneous yet thoughtful oneness with the rituals of nature, with the sensuous seasons ever renewed in the rich and rolling farmlands, where space and time seem to ignore the mechanisms of modern convention and convenience. Irwin offers a kind of theater for our jaded spectatorial senses and soul, a morality play of intentional community living beyond the easy reach of the viewer, yet available to the lens of camera and photo editor. Our world of fallen hyper-knowledge stumbles on half-blindly in contrast to this imagined world of wise and benign knowing and being.

But in the knowingness in the eyes and faces and bodies of these people, there may be more. There may be an insistence on the complexity of their own world, one made all the more complex for the relationships it must negotiate with the world where cameras are plentiful. The very young seem to reveal most a sense of dis-ease about the relationship. Or is it the plain line of their clothing, so like their parents', that triggers a sense of mature meaning and grace beyond their years? Certainly these children must function from the start with a sense of their own radical difference, their costume a part of their ongoing cultural performance, modest yet so complicated and so daringly visible.

Inevitably, the pictures invite us to recall our often asked questions about our complicity with a nineteenth-century technology that not only releases but colonizes what it reveals. We travel (as investigators, explorers, voyeurs, perhaps seekers) into the Amish world with our paradigmatic cultural tool, the camera, retrieve our images, and return safely enough to the "outside" world. Doesn't our gloriously tempting aestheticization of ethnic culture include some kind of violation, some transgression, for us who look?

Although Good's written text does not refer literally to the respective photographs, the implicit relationships between essay and neighboring images are strong. Further, the captions linked to the photographs bridge essay and image, and do render their relationship almost explicit. At times, it seems as though the image as aesthetic object or documentary insight is reduced, and that it serves as illustration for the essay. The image is too controlled; its voice flattened (see "farm comedy," 110). There is, if we attend to the text in relation to the image, not quite enough room for a pleasurable, rewarding "play" in interpreting images imaginatively. The reader is guided too firmly. With the strong mediating voice of the text, the risk is that the image becomes an extension of a tourist site, a theme park, that we may or may not have wanted to visit.

About a quarter-century ago, when J. Winfield Fretz and I discussed our approach to *People Apart: Portrait of a Mennonite World in Waterloo County, Ontario* (1977), we debated the question of distance, of "play," between producers of the book, the subject of the book, and the reader. I argued for an editorial voice that announced its alien status as stranger and outsider, its incommensurable distance from the subject; a voice that could not really speak for the subject, so that the subject might be left to speak with multiple voices of his or her own. I can’t say whether we succeeded. But it is that distance and those voices that we risk losing in the persistently crowded editorial persuasiveness of this wonderfully wrought book, *Amish Children*.

Paul Tiessen, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON

Call for Papers

"Responding to Terrorism: Does Nonviolence Work?"

Special issue:
The Conrad Grebel Review, Spring 2002

The Conrad Grebel Review is planning a special issue for Spring 2002 on the theme, "Responding to Terrorism: Does Nonviolence Work?" We seek scholarly papers and reflective essays that present thoughtful and provocative analyses and ideas in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the ongoing international military reply to those events. Submissions might be on such topics as: philosophical reflections on just war theory; nonviolent activism; non-military responses to terrorism; challenges to peace theology; terrorism and human security; educating children about peace in a world of violence; peace movements and terrorism, for instance.

The Conrad Grebel Review is an interdisciplinary journal with an international readership published three times a year by Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario. Each issue normally contains scholarly articles, responses to articles, reflections, creative writing, and book reviews. Recent issues have been on such themes as Religion and Science, Pluralism and Diversity, and Theologies of Service.

To send submissions or make inquiries, please contact Dr. Marlene Epp, Editor, *The Conrad Grebel Review*, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3G6, (519) 885-0220 x257

Deadlines for initial drafts or proposals to submit is **January 31, 2002.**

Call for Papers

Mennonite/s Writing: An International Conference

Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana
24-27 October 2002

Conference sponsored by Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, and Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. Proposals invited for 20-minute presentations on poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, drama and films by Mennonite authors (or by non-Mennonite authors about Mennonites). Papers may deal with theoretical issues, single authors or writings, or sets of related writings.

Special sessions will be devoted to the writings of Rudy Wiebe, in recognition of the 40th anniversary of Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many*.

One page (250-word) paper proposals should state the thesis of the paper and the way it will be developed. A long biographical paragraph or one-page academic resume should accompany the proposal. Deadline for proposals is **1 April 2002.**

Canadian residents should send proposals to:
Hildi Froese Tiessen, Conrad Grebel University Collge
Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3G6
htiessen@uwaterloo.ca

United States residents should send proposals to:
Ervin Beck, Department of English, Goshen College
Goshen, Indiana, 46526
ervinb@goshen.edu

Call for Papers

TMTC Graduate Student Conference
November 21-22, 2002
Toronto, Ontario

"Issues in the Future of Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship"

The Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre invites all graduate students and recently graduated students in the area of religion to submit an abstract on the above theme.

The aim of the conference is to provide an opportunity for future scholars to offer, before their peers, papers and presentations that contribute to Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship. The conference will be divided into two parts, the first consisting of papers on the theme of the conference, and the second of panel discussions on the topic "Integrity of Faith and Scholarship." *The Conrad Grebel Review* has expressed interest in publishing the proceedings from the conference. To further encourage students to participate, there will be a travel bursary for those individuals giving papers or presenting in the panel discussions.

All submissions will be chosen anonymously. Abstracts should not be longer than 500 words and be clearly marked whether they are for the paper or panel section of the conference. Abstracts should be accompanied by a cover letter identifying name, address, and abstract title. Do not put your name or your university affiliation on the abstract. The deadline for receiving abstracts is February 28, 2002.

Submit abstracts to:
TMTC Graduate
Student Conference
47 Queen's Park Cres. East
Toronto, ON M5S 2C3
mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca

For more information, contact
Jeremy Bergen at Toronto
Mennonite Theological Centre
mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca