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Issues in the Future of
Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship

Book Reviews

Foreword

We are delighted to offer in this issue a dozen papers from a graduate student conference on "Issues in the Future of Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship" held in Toronto last November. Whether you count yourself among the wise old heads or the smart new ones, these papers will introduce you to some of the interests and sensibilities of the up-and-coming generation. For context, you should start with the preface by Phil Enns and Jeremy Bergen.

Looking ahead: Our Fall 2003 issue will feature papers from an Iranian Shi'i - Muslim and Mennonite Christian dialogue convened last October in Toronto, while our Winter 2004 number will focus on the Rudy Wiebe component of a Mennonite/s Writing symposium held that same month in Goshen, Indiana.

As ever, we invite submissions — and subscriptions!

Stephen A. Jones, *Managing Editor*
C. Arnold Snyder, *Academic Editor*

C O R R E C T I O N !

The Winter 2003 issue reprinted, with permission, an article by Tom Yoder Neufeld (see above) that had previously appeared in *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 2002): 257-86. However, we credited another journal by mistake. We apologize for the error, and we heartily thank E. Morris Sider, editor of *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, for allowing us to reprint the article. — SAJ

Conference Notices

Second Mennonite Graduate Student Conference: 18-20 June 2004, Elkhart, IN. Theme: Religious Texts. Proposals due 15 Jan. View call for papers at http://individual.utoronto.ca/menno_theology/. E-mail mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca.

Peace Theology Research Project Conference: 1-4 August 2004, Akron, PA. Theme: Seeking the Welfare of the City: Questions of Public Peace, Justice and Order. Proposals due 31 Dec. Contact Bob and Judy Zimmerman Herr, MCC. Phone 717 859-1151. E-mail bh@mcc.org.

Issues in the Future of Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship

PREFACE

Convening a gathering of Mennonite graduate students in religion has been a good intention for some time. Given that Toronto was to host the 2002 annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC), under the leadership of former director and current student affairs advisor Lydia Neufeld Harder, seized the opportunity to hold a conference on November 21-22, just prior to this larger event. The conference drew a relatively diverse group of 28 students (18 men, 10 women; 12 currently from the US, 16 from Canada) in fields such as theology, ethics, religious studies, New Testament, Old Testament, philosophy, history, and pastoral studies.

The aim of the conference was to provide an opportunity for future scholars to offer, before their peers, papers and presentations that contribute to Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship. The reality is that Mennonite doctoral students study in secular or ecumenical settings, or in both, and even if they understand this scholarship to be in service of the church, they rarely get a chance to test work with colleagues of a similar faith heritage. The theme, "Issues in the Future of Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship," was broad enough to encompass the issues with which participants were already working, yet it pushed the presenters to consider the differences in method and substance that Mennonite particularity makes.

Beyond the benefits to participants of getting to know future colleagues and engaging in substantive conversation, the conference was an occasion for the wider church to indicate support of its future teachers and theological leaders. Grants from Mennonite Foundation of Canada, Mennonite Education Agency (USA), and the Good Foundation of Waterloo, Ontario covered meeting and travel expenses. Deans from several Anabaptist-related institutions met with the group, and discussed college and seminary teaching trends and the qualities they look for in faculty members. Yet, given that younger scholars in various ways straddle the worlds of church, academy, and secular society, finding the balance of critical distance, faithful engagement, and institutional location remains an open question.

If the papers given at the conference are evidence of how younger scholars are balancing church, academy, and society, the future looks promising. In terms of church, there was a healthy balance between critically analyzing of the history of Mennonites, understanding current practices, and suggesting paths Mennonites might benefit from in future. Of note here were the suggestions that Mennonites might benefit by "borrowing" from the Reformed and Catholic traditions.

With regard to the academic dimension, the papers reflected a certain ambivalence. A sub-theme of the conference, introduced by one of the presenters, was the Mennonite reliance on the work of John Howard Yoder. While the papers reflected an impressive range of methods found in academia today, the regular references to Yoder suggested a narrowness of perspective that limits the richness of the Mennonite tradition. Yet, the variety of methods of study — including community studies, performance theory, and analytic philosophy — combined with students' self-identification as Mennonite, suggests that the boundaries of Mennonite scholarship are quite broad. Perhaps, in the future, Mennonite scholars will no longer need to think of fellow Mennonites as their primary audience.

Along with church and academy, the papers reflected an interest in engaging the larger society. On the issue of pacifism, there was a critical historical analysis of the relationship between Mennonites and the Nazis, as well as a contemporary consideration of the relationship between pacifism and involvement in the state. On the issue of culture, there was a study of gender identity among Mennonite women in the 1920s and 30s and another on how Mennonites might perform their faith on the world's stage. This suggests that Mennonite scholarship in the future will continue to struggle in connecting faith with the world.

Response to the conference was overwhelmingly positive. It was an ideal opportunity for young scholars, sharing the same faith background, to get to know each other better through both formal presentations and informal discussion. Due to this response and the encouragement of the participants, we are already planning the next conference with the hope that these events, held on a regular basis, will serve to encourage both the church and Mennonite scholarship.

Jeremy Bergen, Toronto School of Theology
Phil Enns, Toronto School of Theology

Mennonite-Nazi Collaboration and Coming to Terms With the Past: European Mennonites and the MCC, 1945-1950

Steve Schroeder, University of Notre Dame

Postwar Mennonite historiography has revealed very little about how Prussian and Ukrainian Mennonites confronted their wartime collaboration with the Nazis. Instead, most historical accounts about the postwar plight of Eastern European Mennonites focus on the great suffering and losses experienced during and after the war (which have mostly involved the Ukrainian group). It is my contention that a general charge of collaboration is valid in this case, not only because of the absence of European Mennonite resistance to Nazism but, more specifically, because archival evidence clearly reveals that a significant number of Mennonites actively supported the Nazi regime.

This study examines how Eastern European Mennonites fashioned their own unique historical understanding of their involvement in the Second World War, and why their choice to do so remains relevant for Mennonites today. Drawing on archival resources — including Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) correspondence and government documents — I address this topic by examining the experiences of East European Mennonites between 1945 and 1950.

I

Over the four centuries of their Prussian domicile, Mennonites continually struggled for acceptance, a struggle that revealed their proclivity to work toward a synthesis of their time-honored religious traditions with the prevailing national ethos.[1] By the 1930s, Prussian Mennonites had come to prioritize the latter and, contrary to the inherent incompatibility between Mennonitism and Nazi ideology, willingly participated in bringing the Nazis to power in supporting the German war effort. All Prussian Mennonite men of draft age joined the German Army (*Wehrmacht*) and the SS, some even before the introduction of universal conscription.[2] An untold number of Ukrainian Mennonite men also joined the *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen SS* after German forces seized Ukraine in 1941.[3] With both communities compromising their traditional religious beliefs, the Danziger Mennonites were able to maintain

their community during the Third Reich and the Ukrainians were able to survive and mete out revenge against the Soviets, whom they had learned to despise. Although aware of the Nazi brutality and genocide that was occurring in nearby concentration and extermination camps, many of these Mennonites anticipated an eventual German war victory as the will of God.[4] When the exact opposite happened and the Red Army encroached on the Vistula Delta, some Mennonites like Klaus Froese, who recognized that German aggression had aroused Russian vengeance, still pondered: "Will our victimization come to an end soon?"[5]

After their flight from the Vistula Delta in January 1945, the Mennonites found themselves either in Denmark or in the British zone of occupation in western Germany, often in terrible living conditions and nearing starvation.[6] North American MCC workers — some of whom had done volunteer work in England during the war — had expanded their operations to mainland Europe in 1944 and made contact with these refugees, setting up camps at Copenhagen, in the British occupation zone in Gronau, Fallingsbostel, and Pelplin, Poland during 1946-1947. Here, the refugees' status shifted to that of a defeated enemy, bringing with it notions of injustice and victimization, mixed with fear.

The Mennonite refugees' greatest fears were of dying in the camps and, for the Ukrainians, of being repatriated to the Soviet Union, which one Mennonite woman believed would be proof of God's "punishment for sin" against the Mennonites; another woman begged for death in its stead.[7] The major problem for the Danzigers, however, was that the Inter-Governmental Council for Refugees (IGCR) and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) classified them as German citizens (*Reichsdeutsche*) which rendered them — since Germany was not a member of the United Nations — ineligible for care in IGCR/IRO and UN Displaced Persons camps and for IGCR/IRO emigration expenses.[8] Now, after a centuries-long battle to gain the *Reichsdeutsche* status, it became the bane of their existence. The IGCR/IRO also refused to finance former *Werhmacht,* SS, and Nazi Party members, an aggregation which included a great number of Danziger, Ukrainian, and Dutch Mennonites.

The sum of these experiences came to bear on Mennonite refugees' response to their new plight of homelessness and their subsequent reflection on the events of the war. Amid the great uncertainties of Central European statehood in the immediate postwar era, when nationality often determined whether one was persecuted or privileged and, in some cases, whether one would live or die, the Mennonites adopted a fluid national identity. When their

formerly favored characteristics of nationality, ethnicity, and language became the very things that brought the wrath of others to bear upon them, the Mennonites denied any association with the Nazi regime — and with their German heritage — and remodeled their existing identity to distance themselves from their recent past to avoid retribution from their enemies.

II

This remodeling of communal identity was to be founded on the familiar Mennonite motifs of victimization, martyrdom, and nonresistance; motifs that found support both in and beyond the Mennonite community, and that Mennonites would maintain long after the end of the war.[9] MCC workers, who also believed and propagated the notion that Danzigers were victims of the war, were busy devising new strategies to elevate Mennonite status beyond nationality in order to circumvent the political restrictions on population transfers that the Allied powers and the UN had established.[10] The emerging discourse fostered two related ideas that would affect the ability of Mennonites to reflect critically on their collaboration with the Nazis: it distanced Mennonites from their ethnic and national roots, and bolstered the Mennonite notion of being "in, but not of, the world."

The first strategy that served to alter Eastern European Mennonite national affiliation was fashioned in the summer of 1945, when Ukrainian Mennonites, hoping to gain entrance into Holland and receive UN and IGCR assistance, claimed that they were of Dutch ancestry. One MCC administrator, together with a Mennonite Dutch pastor, convinced Dutch officials of the Mennonites' Dutch ancestry which, they claimed, could be traced back to the beginning of the sixteenth century.[11] Under the terms of the 22 December 1945 agreement with Holland's Frontier Guard, under which the MCC assumed responsibility for Mennonites of Dutch origin, a "Menno Pas" was created. The Pas attested to the Mennonites' Dutch ancestry and functioned as a Mennonite passport that permitted Ukrainian Mennonites to enter Holland. In 1948, one MCC worker revealed the true motive for claiming Dutch ancestry, even after he recognized the problems inherent in doing so. He concluded: "We may feel unjustified in classifying them as of Dutch ethnic origin [because of their language and culture today]. On the other hand, what justification do we have in classifying them as of Prussian or German ethnic origin with its present implications?"[12]

The MCC assisted in many other attempts to distance Ukrainian Mennonites from both Soviet and German nationalities through the publication of numerous articles and documents concerning Ukrainian Mennonites' Dutch ancestry, and the proper historical and contemporary definition of "Mennonite."[13] In 1946, an MCC administrator created a document on Mennonite identity for the newly-formed IRO, entitled "Mennonite Refugees in Germany," in which he informed IRO officers that "the Mennonite brotherhood for 450 years has consistently endeavored to put into practice nonresistance, nonswearing of oaths, and freedom of conscience."[14]

Another MCC administrator went so far as to provide Mennonites with the proper answers to questions that IRO administrators used in categorizing refugees and assessing their eligibility for IRO care. A circular to Mennonites explained that they were not to claim "German" or "ethnic German" nationality, but instead to identify themselves as Mennonites:

> How should I answer the question about nationality? The question is very complicated but also a very simple question . . . this question should be answered with 'Mennonite.' And as a result, the person in question will be processed in a preferential way. In any case, one should not check off 'German' or 'ethnic German.' In this case one might also "forget" one's citizenship papers. We do not wish to answer the questions with a partial truth and lie, but we want to maintain the old [biblical] principle: yes is yes, no is no.[15]

Consequently, IRO administrators came to doubt the Mennonites' claim to Dutch ancestry and questioned the integrity of the MCC.[16] The IRO's doubts were realized after their Preparatory Commission began investigating the wartime affiliations of Mennonites at the Fallingsbostel DP camp in 1949. Their random surveys revealed that many Mennonites had been Nazi Party members, and many had served in the *Waffen SS*, the *Wehrmacht*, and the *Sicherheitsdienst*, and that Ukrainian Mennonites had received German citizenship in 1943.[17] The MCC went to great lengths to prove that the Ukrainians were forced to do these things against their will, and embarked on an elaborate diplomatic campaign on their behalf.[18] In the end, the MCC convinced the IRO of their innocence, even though many Ukrainian Mennonites, motivated to avenge the deaths of loved ones under Soviet rule, had volunteered for the *Wehrmacht*.[19]

A second strategy involved Danziger and Ukrainian Mennonites furthering their traditional notion of being "in, but not of, the world." As explained in a July 1946 letter to the IRO, one MCC administrator asserted:

> The Mennonite refugees are undoubtedly a remnant of a distinctly characterized people, a *Volk*, which is neither Russian nor German.[20]

Similarly, in an interview in 1988, the same MCC worker recalled:

> They [the refugees] changed their identity when it suited them. They became chameleons . . . all those in the Russian zone . . . tried to pass themselves off as Germans so they would not be shipped back to Russia, but during the IRO interviews they flipped and suddenly they were not Germans . . . apparently they had no qualms . . . they played this game constantly . . . but in another sense, it wasn't a game, *they were neither German nor Russian nor even Dutch — they were Mennonite, a distinctly separate group.*[21]

A striking contrast to this Mennonite claim to "other-worldliness" is found in the Mennonite experience in Poland between 1945 and 1949. Although it was not uncommon for MCC workers to refer to Mennonite refugees as "our people" and to prioritize their well-being over others, this familial notion was extended to *land* in Poland that was previously owned and farmed by Mennonites.[22] MCC administrators in Pelplin, Poland, revealed the underlying motive for MCC's presence in the area in their MCC report:

> The MCC would like to set up a farm project on the uncultivated lands east of the Vistula River. It had formerly been farmed chiefly by Mennonites . . . I propose that if possible we obtain full adminis-trative responsibility for a good sized tract of land in that area . . . with the idea of re-establishing a church and mission activities there.[23]

Moreover, in contrast to his MCC brethren in western Germany, an MCC worker recognized the German ethnicity of all Mennonites in Poland, claiming that "we have three nationalities of Mennonites here in Poland: the Russian Mennonites, the German Mennonites from East Prussia and the Polish Mennonites from the communities near Warsaw. Nevertheless, all are distinctly of German race and wish to hold to their German culture."[24] MCC workers succeeded in securing exit permits for these distinctly "German" Mennonites from Prussia, Ukraine, and Poland in 1948.[25]

These strategies of identity modification were legitimized by means of a very powerful notion that the MCC and European Mennonites were involved in a divinely-sanctioned exodus from Communism and suffering to a new life abroad. These beliefs served to justify the tactics employed in manipulating Mennonite identity and various government agencies. As one MCC man explained to another in 1952: "I fully agree with you that we do not want to do anything illegal. But what is legal and what is illegal, when it comes to saving people from those godless Red bandits?"[26]

The exodus motif finds abundant representation in a variety of Mennonite sources, including personal diaries of Mennonite refugees and MCC documents. Indeed, a Canadian Mennonite, who was a member of the Canadian Board of Colonization, and an MCC administrator both gleaned inspiration for their work from Moses' declaration before Pharaoh, "there shall not an hoof be left behind," a slogan that they included in their reports to other MCC administrators.[27] Similarly, in the pamphlet, "History of the Mennonites," written to British occupation administrators in 1945, the MCC offered this description: "The Mennonites look again over the ocean towards that far free country with its wide empty plains and think it their new Canaan the country which is waiting for their peaceful labor."[28]

Mennonite appropriation of the exodus motif was insensitive at best, given the very recent fate of millions of European Jews. Here, the Mennonites depicted themselves as God's chosen, peace-loving people who were being led to their new promised land. This notion is nowhere more evident than in the 1947 MCC movie, aptly named "Exodus," which depicted MCC work among European refugees and was shown to IRO officials in Geneva with great effect. The MCC creator of the movie recalled how those who "saw the film . . . felt justified in coming down on the side of eligibility [for German Mennonite assistance]."[29] MCC's tireless lobbying, together with the easing of North American immigration policies after 1950, resulted in the "exodus" of all Mennonite applicants, regardless of their wartime status.

In the immediate postwar era, Danziger and Ukrainian Mennonites tried to distance themselves from their German heritage. Some claimed that even while they collaborated with the Nazis and served in the German armed forces, they had remained *Wehrlos* (pacifist) in their hearts."[30] Danziger and Ukrainian Mennonites returned to familiar motifs of suffering and martyrdom, and of being "in, but not of, the world," leaving Mennonites, and

their posterity, without an adequate, critical reflective posture with respect to the final years of their Eastern European domicile.

III

Indeed, the historical focus on the "exodus," while fostering a motif of suffering, has enabled Mennonites to forget about their Nazi collaboration. The IRO's emigration restrictions resulted in some Mennonites choosing to lie outright about their identity. There are at least four known cases of Dutch Mennonite men who had been charged with war crimes for collaborating with the Nazis in various ways, who managed, with MCC assistance, to emigrate to Paraguay under false pretenses.[31] For example, the notorious case of Jacob Luitjens, a former member of the Dutch SA and the Dutch counter-resistance, ended in 1988 with his both being found guilty of Nazi collaboration and becoming the first Canadian citizen to be charged, stripped of Canadian citizenship, and forcibly deported for such collaboration.[32] These examples indicate the extent of Mennonite enmeshment with Nazism, and reveal the lack of Mennonite critical reflection on that relationship.

Some Mennonites think that the difficult and complex circumstances in which they were forced to conduct themselves and make decisions have not been fully appreciated by those who question their wartime actions. The popular rendition of Nazi Germany as a nation of homogeneous depravity, according to one Mennonite veteran of the *Luftwaffe,* is the result of "hocus pocus."[33] To another veteran it is simply "a historical joke."[34] Indeed, many Mennonites, and others, feel that historical objectivity has been sidelined in German historiography and thus maintain their defensive posture.

However, significant reflection and criticism are certainly appropriate and are the duty of theologians, scholars, and those otherwise involved in the events of this period.

Some have attempted to face the past with courage and integrity. One Danziger, Siegfried Bartel, has openly confronted his actions during the Second World War.[35] Bartel converted to pacifism following the war after "re-thinking Jesus' teaching,"[36] but maintains that his guilt came from fighting in the war, not for having collaborated with the Nazis.[37] Generally, Bartel's autobiography — in which he condemns all forms of violence — has not evoked a warm response from the Prussian Mennonites, since, according to him, "most of

them are not quite willing to think it through in regards of their own experiences in the war. . . . they take the view . . . [that they] couldn't help it."[38]

Bartel's acknowledgement of responsibility serves as a challenge not only to Danzigers but to all Mennonites living in the post-World War 2 era. Understandably, many Danzigers, and other European Mennonites, share in Polish Mennonite Edna Schroeder Thiessen's experience. Edna claimed: "When I came to Canada [after the war], I built a wall between myself and Europe, and I wanted to keep the memories behind that wall. . . . [N]ow I sometimes go behind the wall to bring out the stories for telling."[39] Rather than, as one MCC administrator put it, "let[ing] sleeping dogs lie,"[40] appropriate reflection begins when Mennonites, like Thiessen, have the courage to bring out their wartime stories from behind their walls.

As we have seen, the history of the Prussian Mennonites — which includes my own family history — and the Ukrainian Mennonites reveals their enmeshment with the "German Germans," the German *Volk*. This complex enmeshment implicates all members of the *Volk* in the same experience. In the end, any healthy alteration of this implication can be accomplished only through contextualizing the Mennonite refugee experience in the broader European experience, not in order to excuse it but in order to achieve the distance necessary for appropriate reflection. This refection allows for a more self-critical posture and encourages the acceptance of responsibility. In working through our past in this way, we will be able to work toward the restoration of denominational authenticity and credibility; two things which are requisite if the Mennonites intend to sustain respect in the German nation and throughout the world, and maintain sufficient vitality in their faith to pass on to their posterity.

Notes

[1] See Diether Goetz Lichdi, *Mennoniten im Dritten Reich: Dokumentation und Deutung* (Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1977), 5-34. Also see Mark A. Jantzen, *At Home in Germany? The Mennonites of the Vistula Delta and the Construction of a German Nation.* (University of Notre Dame: Ph.D. Dissertation, 2002).

[2] Leaders of the German Mennonite community published a statement in June 1937 to the effect that: "Under the new conditions, as of 11 June 1934, the German Mennonite Conferences have given up the principle of nonresistance." C. Neff, E. Haendiges and A. Braun, "Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden: Eine notwendige Berichtigung," *Mennonitische Blätter*

(June 1937): 72. While some were likely coerced against their will, many volunteered for the armed forces. Siegfried Bartel, a Mennonite captain in the *Wehrmacht*, claims that "by the time I enlisted in 1937, the question of serving in the army was no longer an issue for Mennonites in Prussia." Siegfried Bartel, *Living With Conviction: German Army Captain Turns to Cultivating Peace* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994), 28.

[3] Frank Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Russian Revolution* (Altona, MB: Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, 1962), 46.

[4] Horst Gerlach recalled how, at the outset of "Operation Barbarossa," his school teacher had applied the apocalyptic account in the book of Revelation to the impending final victory of the Germans in the Second World War. Similarly, the *Gemeindeblatt der Mennoniten* began in the early 1940s to print articles with eschatological and apocalyptic overtones pointing to a German triumph. On these points, see Lichdi, *Dritten Reich*, 98 and interview with Horst Gerlach by author, June 2000.

[5] Klaus Toews, "Die Flucht" in Maria Foth, ed., *Lieder aus der Not* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1950), 29-31.

[6] MCA, MCC Records, "Refugee Migration, Denmark, 1945-1948," "Denmark Unit Report, December 1-4, 1946.

[7] Quoted in Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, *Up From the Rubble* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1991), 94.

[8] MCA, MCC Records "Refugee Migration — IRO, July 1949-September 1952," letter from the International Refugee Organization to Chief Eligibility Officer titled "Eligibility of Mennonites." T. D. Regehr provides the various refugee categories established by the occupying powers after 1945. "*Reichsdeutsche*" were German nationals living within the borders of the German Reich on 1 September 1939. "*Volksdeutsche*" were those of ethnic German heritage that lived beyond the borders of the Reich on 1 September, 1939. Because they lived in the Free City of Danzig, German Danzigers were considered as *Reichsdeutsche*. See Regehr, *Displaced Persons,* 266. See also T. D. Regehr, "Of Dutch or German Ancestry? Mennonite Refugees, MCC, and the International Refugee Organization," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 13 (1995): 250.

[9] Articles in *Time* magazine claimed that German Mennonites were pacifists and were "true, believing Christians . . . sheep in the midst of wolves." One article referred to the displaced Prussian Mennonites as being "of Dutch extraction" who were taken care of by MCC workers, who "look after Mennonite conscientious objectors in all parts of the world." See "Plain People," *Time* 49 (February 10, 1947): 60-61; and "The Poor Ones," *Time* 49 (March 10, 1947): 38.

[10] In an MCC pamphlet written in the late 1940s, author William Snyder, writing to Mennonites in North American churches, claimed: "Our Danzig and East Prussian brethren are not considered eligible for governmental assistance due to the fact that they are looked upon as 'German nationals' because their homelands were unified with pre-war Germany. However, *since they are also victims of the war* and members of our household of faith, the MCC is seeking to assist them." *Mennonite Refugees: Whose Responsibility?* (Akron, PA: MCC Press, 1948): 3.

[11] Robert Kreider reveals how MCC workers used Horst Penner's research on Mennonite ancestry, particularly the lists of Mennonite last names, to convince the Dutch government of the Russian Mennonites' Dutch heritage. See Kreider, *Interviews of Peter and Elfrieda Dyck: Experiences in MCC Service in Europe, 1941-1949* (Akron, PA: MCC, 1988), 216. See also MCA, MCC Records, "Refugee Migration, January 1947-1948," official government correspondence from M. R. Thomas, B.O.A.R zone eligibility officer, to regional eligibility

officers titled "Information Circular Number 9 — List of Mennonite Family Names*."* The Mennonite names listed were of Dutch or east Frisian origin.; and MCA, MCC Records "Refugee Migration, IRO, 1947-March 1948," "List of Mennonite Family Names*,*" 7 November 1947.

[12] Cornelius Krahn, "The Ethnic Origin of the Mennonites from Russia," *Mennonite Life* 3, no. 3 (July 1948): 48.

[13] Prussian Mennonite minister Ernst Crous's document of 3 September 1945, "Die Geschichte der hollaendisch-deutschen Mennoniten in Russland und ihre Beziehungen zu Kanada und den USA," supports claims to Dutch origin. See MCA, MCC Records "Basel Relief Unit Germany, Mennonites in Europe, Report."

[14] MCA, MCC Records "Basel Relief Unit, Germany," letter from Peter Dyck to IRO officials titled, "Mennonite Refugees in Germany," July 1946.

[15] MCA, MCC Records "Refugee Migration January 1947-1948," circular from Siegfried Janzen, 25 April 1947 titled, "Rundschrieben Nr.2 "Liebe Fluechtlingsgeschwister in Deutschland."

[16] Regehr, *Dutch*, 12.

[17] Epp, *Exodus*, 409. See MCA, MCC Records "Refugee Migration, Fallingsbostel, 1949-1950."

[18] Letters written in 1950 by Franz Janzen, Hans Derksen, Margarethe Klassen, Agathe Wiebe, Anna Enns, Sara Regier, Johann Peters and others explain the forced German naturalization and recruitment in the German army and SS units. See MCA, MCC Records "Refugee Migration, Fallingsbostel, 1949-1950;" and "Refugee Migration — IRO, July 1949-September 1952," letter from the IRO to the Chief Eligibility Officer titled, "Eligibility of Mennonites." C. F. Klassen went to IRO headquarters in Geneva to plead on behalf of the 'trouble cases' and, with Snyder and Thiessen, appealed to the Canadian IRO, Immigration Branch and Labor Department officials in Ottawa, who ultimately influenced the reversal of the new IRO restrictions on immigration. See letter from Myer Cohen, Assistant Director of the Department of Health Care and Maintenance, IRO to the IRO Chief Eligibility Officer, 23 July 1949 and the reversal of the restrictions in a letter from Myer to the same officer on 3 October 1949. MCA, MCC Records, "Refugee Migration, IRO, July 1949-September 1952."

[19] One young Ukrainian Mennonite man claimed after the war: "I have avenged my father's suffering and death tenfold. I have killed at least ten Red Army soldiers." Quoted in Henry Loewen, *Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2000), 105.

[20] MCA, MCC Records, "Basel Relief Unit, Germany," letter from Peter Dyck to IRO Officials, July 1946.

[21] Kreider, *Interviews,* 322, italics added.

[22] MCA, MCC Records, "Refugee Migration, Denmark, 1945-1948," "Denmark Relief Unit Report, 1-4 December 1946"; and letter from W. Snyder to H. Bender, 9 December 1947.

[23] MCA, MCC Records, "Basel Relief Unit, Poland, 1948," letter from J. Alton Horst to John Horst, 16 March 1948.

[24] MCA, MCC Records, "Basel Relief Unit, Poland, 1948," "Present Conditions of the Mennonites in Poland, 1948."

[25] Letter from Jaroszuka, chief delegate of the Ministry of Recovered Territories of the Polish Republic, 25 May 1948. See MCA, MCC Records, "Basel Relief Unit, Poland, 1948," Menno Fast's report, "A Report on Our Work Among the Mennonites in Poland, April-June 1948;" and letter from Menno Fast to Siegfried Janzen, 3 September 1948.

[26] MCA, MCC Records, "MCC Correspondence: Inter-Office, C. F. Klassen, 1952," letter from Klassen to W. T. Snyder, 17 January 1952.

27 Epp, *Exodus*, 409.

[28] MCA, MCC Records, "Refugee Migration, Gronau, January 1947-1948," "History of the Mennonites," 20 September 1945.

[29] Kreider, *Interviews*, 337.

[30] Interview with W. R. by author, June 2000. Diether Goetz Lichdi claims: "The younger ones would agree with it [*Wehrlosigkeit*] and the older ones would say — we always practiced it! They always practiced *Wehrlosigkeit* in their hearts." Interview with Lichdi by author, 6 June 2000 (Heilbronn, Germany).

[31] The Behage brothers posed as Gunther Klassen and Lothar Driedger, Joop Postma as Heinz Wiebe, and Jacob Luitjens—a member of the Dutch SA and Dutch counter-resistance—as Gerhard Harder. See John Thiesen, *Mennonite and Nazi?* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1999), 206-207.

[32] Luitjens served only 28 months of the life sentence that had been decided in 1948 at his trial in absentia. Thiesen, *Mennonite and Nazi?*, 207.

[33] Interview with W. R. by author, 26 July 1999 (Winnipeg, MB).

[34] Interview with S. B. by author, 11 April 2000 (Agassiz, BC).

[35] The *Lübecker Post* printed "Festgottesdienste in allen Lübecker Kirchen — Hilfe fur die Fluchtlingen" on 26 September 1945. In it, the author deplored the German claim to 'pure inwardness' (*reine Innerlichkeit*) and claimed that Germans were "guilty" regarding the war, were experiencing a "crisis of faith," and were responsible to "aid in [the refugees'] physical emergency. "Tag der Inneren Mission: Festgottesdienste in allen Lübecker Kirchen — Hilfe fur die Fluchtlingen," *Lübecker Post,* 26 September 1945, 4.

[36] Interview with S. B. by author, 11 April, 2000 (Agassiz, BC).

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] Edna Schroeder-Thiessen, *A Life Displaced* (Kitchener ON: Pandora Press, 2000), 29.

[40] Kreider, *Interviews,* 360.

Beyond Declension and Irony:
Mennonite History as Community Studies

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During World War 2 a series of history booklets was published to "serve as texts for study by men in Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps." The booklets, written by two men, Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, had an instructive purpose:

> The story of Mennonite origins and development is an entrancing one. It is important for understanding Mennonite doctrine and life. Knowing the history of their church is sure to give members an appreciation of their heritage; it also gives a sense of direction as the church endeavors to live its life and give its witness in today's world.[1]

This paper explores American Mennonite historical interpretation with regard to that statement as it relates to pacifism. Historian Paul Toews has highlighted two dominant interpretive lenses in American Mennonite historiography: declension and irony. In noting these two approaches he also calls for this historiography to move beyond them.[2] Here, "declension" is taken to be the understanding of history that sees the present as decline vis-à-vis an authentic, almost pure origin; "irony" is taken as the view of history focused on the unintended consequences of decisions made, often by group leaders.

The narrative contained in Bender and Smith's "handbook" began with the birth of Christ, and described a rapidly expanding church over the centuries into Europe where it entered a steady decline into immorality and apostasy. Evil would control the church until the "great revival," the Protestant Reformation. The rise of Anabaptism is then traced through its Swiss and Dutch origins into North America. North America in this telling is the "center of gravity of world Mennonites . . . because the vigor and power of Mennonitism in America is still unimpaired, and most of all because it has kept a strong evangelical faith and with it the essence of the historic Mennonite heritage."[3] In America, exceptionalism, combined with a westering view of events, gave Mennonite historiography a distinctively American narrative. Here the Mennonite story in America begins as follows: "The early Mennonites in America, like the Puritans of New England, were a select people, selected on the basis of a tender conscience against war and religious intolerance." Their migrating westward across the continent is described as "almost always, like the westward course of empire in general, in a straight line towards the setting sun."[4] The Smith-Bender booklets would subsequently be used in church groups and youth meetings, with the result of popularizing a historical consciousness.[5]

Despite such triumphal, even apocryphal, pronouncements as offered in the CPS handbook history, Bender also articulated a view of history informed by declension. This was manifested in his address, "The Anabaptist Vision,"

and its establishment of a regulative, ahistorical, sixteenth-century break from history as the norm for the rest of Mennonitism to follow. In both his concern was the same, namely to support non-military engagement based upon the premises of Anabaptism, even though in reality a majority of Mennonite men chose some form of military service. What to do when expectations and reality diverge?

An early response was to craft histories informed by the declension approach, describing grand beginnings, a failed present, and a call to renewal. There are many examples of this interpretive model. John Howard Yoder, for one, appropriated it while a member of the Concern group in his critique of mid-twentieth century Mennonitism.[6] In these readings the present is an abysmal farce of an idealized — even romanticized — origins tale. In the process no credit is given to the negotiations people and groups make in their historical journeys through time and space.

The most significant history of American Mennonites is the "Mennonite Experience in America Series" (MEA), a series of books published from 1985 to 1996. By the mid-1980s the ahistorical declension of a previous generation was weakened, especially with the rise of the polygenesis theory of Anabaptist origins. As Paul Toews observed, "Now freed from the Mennonite version of the immaculate conception, historiography could turn in differing directions."[7] Toews explains how this book series replaced declension with irony, an interpretation that helps us understand the "recalcitrance of history."[8] Irony is kinder than declension, in that it recognizes both that history does not move in a straight line and that incongruity between intention and result may simply be paradox in the historical experience. Yet irony also "laments that history does not always achieve its fondest hopes."[9] Through the pages of the MEA series, while communities are present and at times observed, the weight is increasingly — as one moves through the series — on the role of large institutions and denominational leadership.

Examples of irony informing interpretations found in the MEA series include the following. Richard MacMaster describes church leaders failing to notice in their diatribes against "substantial wealth" that such wealth formed "a base for religious community."[10] Theron Schlabach demonstrates the irony of Mennonite youth delaying baptism, and therefore church membership, to the point of marriage so that pre-marital sex could not come under the sanction of church leadership.[11] James Juhnke, in the third volume, is most explicit on the

role of irony. Two central ironies inform his interpretation: (1) Mennonites came to America for religious freedom, material benefit, and community building; while in America they are opened up to pluralism and tolerance, and become a legitimate American religious group by maintaining their distinctive identity; (2) Running parallel to this is the irony of pursuing "biblical simplicity and nonconformity to the world" as the process creates a series of denominations complete with all the trappings of American Protestantism.[12] Finally, Paul Toews demonstrates that the Civilian Public Service had the ironical result of maintaining separation from the world by a more intimate relationship with the Federal Government.[13]

Declension and irony share one important assumption: understanding incongruity between ideals and realities is the Mennonite historical project. Yet local actors existing outside either worldview provide different sets of nuance. Without jettisoning these uses of history, adding a community studies approach to the palate of the historian may help explain those differences within the lived contexts of the actors themselves. Historical processes then need not be ignored or read backwards.

A community study is an approach to people groups first used by anthropologists and more recently adopted by historians.[14] Collectively they have had the positive impact of bringing religion into a historiography mostly empty of religion. For Mennonites this approach can bring some of the "give and take" of the world into a story told mainly about church. It can do this without recourse to a language of either painful declension or resigned irony.[15]

Bender and others can lament, perhaps properly, when half of the eligible men chose against conscientious objector status. To ignore the contingency of those choices is, nevertheless, unfair. This is not to say that pacifism becomes irrelevant; it still remains one of the few markers of Mennonitism — even if some choose to disregard it. It does indicate that there is more to being a Mennonite in America than being a pacifist, but that historically informed position must still be dealt with — whether in disregard or embrace. Consider the following two brief examples from Reedley, California in the mid-twentieth century, where local Mennonites dealt with what it meant to be a pacifist in wartime America and a warrior in a Mennonite community.

An example of pacifism existing as a non-normative factor in the same relative Mennonite community came out in the citizenship trial of Arthur Jost of Reedley in the early 1950s.[16] In his pursuit of American citizenship, Jost faced resistance from the court on account of being a conscientious objector,

a status which raised questions about his loyalty. Jost attempted to convince the court that nonresistance was an integral component of Mennonite teaching, and then subsequently he could be admitted to citizenship under the "substantial religious training" clause and could take the alternate citizenship oath for conscientious objectors. The relevant portion of the Internal Security Act of 1950 (Amended in 1952), quoting Senator McCarran, states that "there is a provision in the bill that a conscientious objector must show to the satisfaction of the naturalization court by clear and convincing evidence that he is opposed to the bearing of arms or the engaging in noncombatant service by reason of religious training and belief."[17] It should have been a simple task.

However, it became nearly impossible for Jost to demonstrate for the court that the Mennonite Brethren Church actually taught nonresistance and the refusal to bear arms. Evidence presented *against* the claim that the MB Church taught refusal to bear arms and noncombatant service was compelling as testimony from Mennonite Brethren ministers was taken into account. For example, Rev. Dan Friesen of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Fresno stated that "there is nothing in the Mennonite creed or teaching to prevent one from wearing the uniform of the Armed Forces, and that the Mennonites as an organization do not teach its members that they should refrain from performing noncombatant service in the Armed Forces."[18] Mennonite ministers of the area gave conflicting testimony, and that was the most damaging piece of evidence against Jost's petition for citizenship.

Another example of the struggle over pacifism is found in the First Mennonite Church of Reedley, a General Conference church. Within a week of Pearl Harbor, First Mennonite sent a letter to the city council, stating the church would be willing to support civil defense, ask congregants to cease speaking German, and suspend the German language in church indefinitely.[19] War bonds were largely ignored until it became prudent in order to avoid government investigation, and then only bare minimums were purchased.[20] In these seemingly innocuous examples a Mennonite congregation is negotiating and adapting to the expectations of the larger society while expressing their principle of nonresistance. In fact, of the three main draft classifications, 19 members served as 1-O in CPS camps, 29 in either 1-A or 1-A-O, and at least seven enlisted.[21] No official reaction or sanction is recorded against those who chose 1-A or 1-A-O, but many non 1-O's reported an unofficial "shunning" by congregants, though no one admitted to doing the shunning.[22]

The complex struggle for understanding pacifism and negotiating its place in the larger society is found in this testimony of why one member served as 1-A:

> Well, I felt I owed it to the soldiers for what they were doing for me. *WHAT WERE THEY DOING FOR YOU?* They were doing something the government demanded. I felt funny saying, "You have no conscience; so you can get yourself shot. I have a conscience so I won't." . . . Well, it was like: there was evil. Hitler exists and others are fighting him. I'm benefiting from their sacrifice. So it made me feel guilty. . . . In the final analysis it is more important to stand up for your convictions than to be overrun by evil.[23]

After the war he became disillusioned, yet kept the same individualistic position as the basis of processing one's response to war:

> I'm now pro-draft resistance. But not just because the church is, rather on the basis of what the person believes. A person must formulate his own peace witness and show it in the way he likes.[24]

Religion and Mennonitism do not appear in any aspect of his developing convictions regarding military service or draft resistance.

Mennonite history is a set of competing narratives seeking to modify, influence, and even control the construction of American Mennonite identity. A community study provides alternative readings of Mennonite history that work with theological ideals, institutional development, and the local context. Here choices are given space where they need not be framed as "failure" or "unintended." Where earlier interpretations of history stressed comparison of the present with some point in the past — usually in sixteenth-century origins — community studies explores the history of a particular people in a particular place on its own terms. What is significant about exploring pacifism in central California are the varieties of understandings of what it means to be a Mennonite. Arthur Jost had difficulty in his quest for citizenship because area ministers did not agree on the role of nonresistance in Mennonite teaching. Reedley Mennonites were split on the importance of pacifism, but perhaps more important was their ability to keep the church from breaking apart. The Mennonite soldier interviewed had a fluid understanding of his identity as a pacifist and warrior, and in both instances he upheld individual choice over Mennonite religious teaching.

Exploring pacifism with community studies thus begs other factors to come into view. In central California, for example, there are Mennonite churches that actively cultivate Mennonite identity through the publication of "History of Mennonites" pamphlets for the neighborhood; others observe the January anniversary of the birth of Anabaptism. These groups tend to be in cities like Los Angeles and Fresno, and suffer deeper identity questions when the racial and ethnic makeup of their neighborhoods shifts. Some Mennonite groups in the valley stood at the gates to keep eastern MCC labor supporters out, yet still considered it important to provide their share of material support to, and regularly participate in, the annual MCC Relief Sale. In this geographic region, Mennonitism in the mid-twentieth century was expressed as much with a belief in non-resistant communitarian ideals as with an individualistic evangelical pietism where BIOLA and Billy Graham did more for Mennonite development than Menno, Bender, or Yoder did.

Is all this a cautionary tale of California Mennonites, living by the setting sun, severed from the past with only a sixteenth-century Anabaptist shaking his finger to look at? Is all this the lamentable result of people caught in the tide of historical process, where the best intentions of thoughtful leaders and helpful institutions are floating far from the shores of intent? Perhaps it is all this, but also it is the result of a community of people adapting to a changing pluralistic society to which they desire to be contributing members.

Notes

[1] Paul Erb, "Preface," *Mennonites and Their Heritage: A Handbook of Mennonite History and Beliefs* (1942, 1944), ed. Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1964), 3.
[2] Paul Toews, "The American Mennonite Search for a Usable Past: From the Declensive to the Ironic Interpretation," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 73.3 (July 1999): 470-84.
[3] Bender and Smith, *Mennonites and Their Heritage*, 77.
[4] *Ibid.*, 81, 94.
[5] Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Open Doors: The History of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1975).
[6] John Howard Yoder, "The Anabaptist Dissent: The Logic of the Place of the Disciple in Society," *Concern*, No. 1, June 1954; John Howard Yoder, "Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality," *Consultation on Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology*, ed. A.J. Klassen (Fresno, CA: Council of Mennonite Seminaries, 1970); John Howard Yoder, "The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," *Concern*, No. 18, July 1971.

[7] Paul Toews, "The American Mennonite Search for a Usable Past," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 73.3 (July 1999): 481.

[8] *Ibid.*, 483.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Richard MacMaster, *Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790*, MEA volume 1 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1985), 110, 136.

[11] Theron Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth-Century America*, MEA volume 2 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1988), 83.

[12] James Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America 1890-1930*, MEA volume 3 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1989), 55, 300.

[13] Paul Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community*, MEA volume 4 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1996), 129ff.

[14] Valerie J. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Marilynn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[15] Although outside the geographic focus of this study, see Royden K. Loewen's *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[16] For a full account of the trial see Silas Langley. "Conscientious Objection in the United States: Individual or Corporate? The Case of *Arthur Jost* v. *The United States*, 1954. *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 69.4 (October 1995): 37-52.

[17] 4th Civil No. 4400 - In District Court of Appeal 4th Appellate District. *Arthur Jost vs. United States of America*. Judge, Hon. Arthur C. Shepard [1952?]. Arthur Jost Papers, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, CA. Box M24, File: Legal Documents: Fourth Appellate District, State of California Aug. 1952-May 1953, 2.

[18] *Ibid.*, 8-12.

[19] Dan Forsyth, "Motivational Bases for Conformity to Religious Norms" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 1983), 90.

[20] *Ibid.*, 91. Forsyth is an anthropologist, and the work cited is a field study where the informants are anonymous.

[21] 1-A is for persons who did not object to direct participation in the war-regular military duty; 1-A-O is military service as noncombatant.

[22] Forsyth, 91-95.

[23] *Ibid.*, 107-108.

[24] *Ibid.*

Why Mennonite Pacifists Should be Reformed Epistemologists

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I. Epistemology

The importance of epistemology to religious belief, as well as the reason for the varying ways the relationship is viewed, immediately becomes apparent, for religious believers of all stripes are committed to believing propositions that many are equally as committed to disputing. Thus, the relationship of religious belief to epistemology is viewed in vastly differing lights. There are some who think that religious belief either flourishes, withers, resists, requires, or is neutral with respect to sustained thought about the nature of knowledge.

Now consider Christian pacifism, characterized roughly as including the belief that at least one condition of faithful witness to Christ is a categorical rejection of violence.[1] For ease of reference, I will identify this condition as the "unrestricted pacifist thesis" (T), and I will cast (T) as follows:

> (T) Followers of Christ ought to reject violence in all forms in every circumstance.

At the very least, pacifism is a bold assertion about the way the world is — an assertion that many thoughtful, intelligent, and moral people judge to be false and, perhaps, immoral as well. Thus the pacifist faces a significant epistemological task — namely, to provide an accurate account of the structure of one's cognitive life according to which pacifist beliefs are justified or warranted. To be sure, having such an account is no guarantee that another person will *agree* that (T) is justified, even when that person is another theist, another Christian, or perhaps even another Anabaptist! But surely for the pacifist who thinks that (T) is justified, it would be helpful to have *some* plausible account as to why *she herself* should think that (T) is a true and good belief.

Now we get to the proper subject of this paper, for I want to argue against a type of "Pacifist Epistemology" being advanced by some pacifists in part for the purpose of supporting (T), either explicitly or implicitly. Although there are no books to date that deal exclusively with pacifism and epistemology, there already are two emerging approaches to peace-motivated theories of knowledge. One approach is represented by Nancey Murphy, who uses

historical and contemporary Anabaptist thinkers as resources for complementing Alasdair MacIntyre's epistemology.[2] A second pacifist approach, the one I will consider, is represented by Chris K. Huebner and Ted Grimsrud.[3] Though Murphy draws on John Howard Yoder (among others) in order to correct what she sees as deficiencies in MacIntyre's approach, Huebner and Grimsrud are anchored more solidly in the Yoder school, due to their reluctance toward the systematization that finds expression in Murphy's work.

My view is that the best epistemological context for one's pacifist beliefs is within Reformed, and not Pacifist, epistemology.[4]

II.   Pacifist Epistemology

A.   Summary

Chris Huebner in "Globalization, Theory and Dialogical Vulnerability: John Howard Yoder and the Possibility of a Pacifist Epistemology" and Ted Grimsrud in "A Pacifist Way of Knowing: Postmodern Sensibilities and Peace Theology" both appear to endorse the following set of theses, the conjunction of which is what I am calling Pacifist Epistemology.

The first premise of Pacifist Epistemology is the normative conditional that if one is a pacifist, then there ought to be consistency between one's pacifist convictions and one's method of epistemic evaluation. Let us call this *the consistency thesis*. Says Huebner, "the message of Christian pacifism can be compromised when it is articulated by a medium that is somehow implicated in the question of violence."[5] That this is so is more readily seen in the current context of globalization which, in its philosophical dimension, illuminates the "interrelationship between medium and message" (50). Huebner doesn't give us the form of the "question of violence," but presumably it is something akin to inquiring about any thing whether it is violent, be that thing a person or a medium.

The second thesis uniting Huebner and Grimsrud is their common judgment that the medium of "modern epistemology" is intrinsically violent, and thus should be rejected. Let us call this the *historical thesis*. According to this thesis, pacifists who embrace modern epistemology are immediately in violation of the consistency thesis. But, what is modern epistemology, and why might we think it is intrinsically violent? Neither Huebner nor Grimsrud provides an explicit sketch of the target they have in view but they give enough clues for us to get a sense of what they have in mind. Huebner cites

with approval Yoder's rejection of problematic "categories of the epistemological mainstream" with its method of "starting from scratch," and its preoccupation with "theoretical dualisms" and "abstract principles." Such epistemological discourse is viewed as a "rhetoric of finality" and constitutes epistemological violence. Grimsrud at least offers a type of historical story in support of his view that modernity and modern epistemology are intrinsically violent, though I think his reading of Descartes and Locke is wrong — but more on that below. The modern emphasis on reason, says Grimsrud, is an unprincipled claim to authority, power, and domination. Indeed, today's multinational corporations are allegedly the direct philosophical descendents of Descartes.[6]

Thus far we have two *negative* restrictions embodied in the consistency thesis and the historical thesis: don't be inconsistent and don't be "modernist." But it is the third dimension of Pacifist Epistemology in which we get a *positive* epistemological criterion stating that epistemic evaluations must be made according to the standard of one's pacifism. Call this the *pacifist-foundationalist thesis*, so named because pacifism is the control-belief according to which all other beliefs and epistemic criteria are subordinated.[7] This leads Huebner to speak of "vulnerability" and "patience" as epistemic virtues. One is epistemologically *vulnerable* if one's beliefs are, at least in principle, open to revision (in contemporary epistemology this is called *epistemic fallibilism*). One is epistemologically *patient* if one tolerates dissenting views (in contemporary epistemology this is called *being polite*). Reading Huebner I get the impression that neither epistemic fallibilism nor politeness is present in contemporary epistemology, but that is simply not the case.[8] At any rate, for Huebner, vulnerability and patience are epistemic virtues because they are seen as epistemological exemplifications of one's pacifism and thus flow out of the pacifist-foundationalist thesis. Grimsrud makes his commitment to the pacifist-foundationalist thesis explicit:

> "Pacifism" is the belief that nothing is as important as love, kind-ness, and peaceableness. One consequence of this belief is a com-plete rejection of violence under any circumstances. For a paci-fist, peaceableness is the central orienting point of life. . . . For a Christian pacifist, this central orienting point of peaceableness is understood in terms of the character of God.[9]

Thus, Grimsrud first endorses (T) and then grants (T) foundational status.

B.   Critique

We set out to ask if Huebner-Grimsrud Pacifist Epistemology has the resources to account for a positive epistemic evaluation of the pacifist thesis (T):

> (T) Followers of Christ ought to reject violence in all forms in every circumstance.

I think we can see that it does not, for while I am happy to endorse the consistency thesis, I think that the historical thesis is false and the pacifist-foundationalist thesis is in need of significant repair.

1.   *The Historical Thesis*

The historical thesis states that modern epistemology is intrinsically violent, and therefore cannot be endorsed by pacifists. With respect to the history of philosophy this is a curious claim, for consider the fountainheads of modern epistemology, Descartes and Locke. Cartesian epistemology is many things — certainly it is a rationalist epistemology (given Descartes's emphasis on a priori knowledge) as well as an infallibilist epistemology (given Descartes's view that knowledge implies certainty). Cartesian epistemology is also a species of foundationalism, for Descartes sensibly believes that some beliefs are justified without being based on other beliefs. But it's hard to see how rationalism, infallibilism, and foundationalism constitute an intrinsically *violent* position. Indeed, neither Huebner nor Grimsrud has shown that this is the case, veiled references to the evils of theoretical dualisms (*pace* Huebner) or proliferations of scare-quotes around terms like "modern project" and "house of authority" (*pace* Grimsrud) notwithstanding.

Similar to Descartes, Locke's epistemology is foundationalist for he, too, sensibly thinks that some beliefs may be justified without appeal to other beliefs. At the end of the day, Locke is more of an epistemological realist than Descartes and thinks that certain knowledge is "short and scanty," for a relative minority of one's beliefs actually count as knowledge.[10] However, Locke thinks that human beings are still able to flourish because God has graciously given the "twilight of probability" as a check against false confidence in inappropriate beliefs. Moreover, it appears that Locke's main purpose in writing his epistemological landmark, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, was to provide some means of mediating disputes — more specifically, the religious disputes of the day — in a way satisfying to all parties.[11]

Both Huebner and Grimsrud are happy to define and indict "modern epistemology"; however, the combination of veiled descriptions with a lack of textual support from live or dead "modern epistemologists" might suggest their characterization is just a caricature — a straw boy that might grow to be a straw man, but nothing more. If whatever they mean by "modern epistemology" is in fact necessarily violent, they have not shown why.[12]

Unless, of course, they mean to say that simply articulating an epistemological standard is intrinsically violent. Perhaps this is what Grimsrud has in mind when he rejects "coercive rationalism," and Huebner when he rejects "theoretical dualisms," perhaps with dualisms like rational/irrational and true/false in view. But that is simply to reject the concept of epistemological normativity all together. And if that's the case, then Pacifist Epistemology itself is in serious trouble, for it is nothing if not normative. Attempting to support the historical thesis by a categorical rejection of epistemological standards isn't going to get Pacifist Epistemologists very far, for such a move entails rejecting the very standards they wish to endorse. So, for these historical and philosophical considerations, it seems wise to reject the Pacifist Epistemologist's historical thesis that modern epistemology is intrinsically violent.

2.   *The Pacifist-Foundationalist Thesis*

Recall the pacifist-foundationalist thesis of Pacifist Epistemology, which states that pacifism is the control-belief according to which all other areas of cognitive life must be subordinated. Put another way, if one is making epistemic judgments out of step with pacifism, it is the faulty epistemic judgments, and not one's pacifism, that must give way. This is the lesson Huebner says we must learn from Yoder, and the reason that Grimsrud gave up faith in nationalism, inerrancy, and the value of abstract normative principles in ethical theory.[13]

Now the pacifist-foundationalist thesis as it stands won't do, for it fails to provide one necessary and important piece of information which I'll get to shortly. I am not objecting to the *foundationalist* part of the pacifist-foundationalist thesis, for in epistemology, foundationalism is the truth of the matter. That is, if any beliefs are known or justified at all, it must be because either they are a justified member of one's cognitive foundations, or they are validly inferred from justified premises, where justification may be traced back to the foundations.[14] Construing justification in terms of coherence is either a dead-end or illusory, for coherence theories invariably wind up being

either a species of foundationalism or viciously circular. So, if one wants to avoid a pervading skepticism such that few of our beliefs are justified, let alone count as knowledge — including our unrestricted pacifist thesis (T) — then one should be a foundationalist. Moreover, I am not objecting to the *pacifist* part of the pacifist-foundationalist thesis, for a good case can be made for thinking that some type of pacifist proposition *can* be a justified member of one's cognitive foundations. Where foundationalists disagree is with respect to how a belief gains access to the foundations, and I think a good story can be told according to which certain moral premises can be *both* justified *and* not held on the basis of any other beliefs. If you think there are any beliefs that satisfy both criteria, then you too are a foundationalist.

What is missing from the pacifist-foundationalist thesis as it stands is a type of access-story explaining how (T) gains access into the foundations (or in virtue of what it is that (T) is properly considered foundational). For surely not just any belief properly merits the privileged status of belonging to epistemological foundations. Presumably, false beliefs should be excluded as well as beliefs that turn out to be only accidentally true. Thus, if (T) is going to do what pacifist-epistemologists need it to do — namely, function as a justified gatekeeper for guarding against unjustified violence-sanctioning beliefs — then we need to know in virtue of what it is that (T) itself is justified. Why should anyone think that (T) is true? Moreover, why should anyone think that (T) is worthy of foundational status?

One move a pacifist epistemologist might make is to say that (T) itself isn't justified, but that somehow (T) is still able to transmit justification or some type of positive epistemic evaluation to other beliefs that we infer from (T). But such a move is unlikely going to appeal to the pacifist epistemologist because first it would require saying that (T) itself really has nothing going for it epistemologically, and second, it would require some type of explanation as to how one might make justified inferences from unjustified premises. The prospects for this are not rosy. A better strategy for the pacifist epistemologist is to tell some story that begins like this: "Here is what's required for a belief to gain access to the foundations of knowledge . . ." and then proceed to fill in the details. Then the second part of the story should begin something like this: "And so now that we see in virtue of what a justified foundational belief *is* justified, we can see that the pacifist belief (T) is a good candidate for just such a belief . . ." and then provide those details.

Pacifist epistemologists like Huebner and Grimsrud would probably resist such a move for it smacks of "modern epistemology," which was held to be intrinsically violent as stated in the historical thesis. But such worries are unfounded and the historical thesis itself is to be rejected on historical and philosophical grounds, and thus cannot be a legitimate barrier to explaining how justified beliefs acquire their justification. No doubt Huebner and Grimsrud think that (T) or something akin to (T) have positive epistemic status — they just haven't told us why. In fact, with the limited resources of Pacifist Epistemology, it's clear that they couldn't tell us why.

C.   Reformed Epistemology

This is why Mennonite pacifists or any other flavor of Christian pacifist should be Reformed in their epistemology, for Alvin Plantinga's Reformed epistemology does have the conceptual resources to explain how warranted foundational beliefs do in fact gain their warrant. Plantinga names the prized epistemic property as *warrant*, where warrant is "that property — or better, *quantity* — enough of which is what makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief."[15] How do beliefs acquire warrant? Just in case:

> that belief is produced in *S* by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for *S*'s kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth. . . . [T]he *degree* of warrant it enjoys depends on the strength of the belief, the firmness with which *S* holds it.[16]

So, according to Plantinga, if I've got some faculty that is designed to produce true beliefs, and that faculty is working properly in the environment for which it is intended, then beliefs produced by that faculty are warranted. Plantinga holds that justified foundational beliefs get their warrant in just this way, and he includes the warranted deliverances of memory, sense, and introspection within the foundations. This makes Plantinga a different sort of foundationalist from Descartes, who restricted foundational beliefs to beliefs in necessary truths from math and logic, and incorrigible beliefs about one's own mental states. Here's where the "Reformed" in Reformed Epistemology comes into play, for Plantinga, following Calvin, thinks that each person has been given a faculty designed to produce belief in God, the *sensus divinitatus*, which, when functioning properly due to the

influence of the Holy Spirit, produces warranted beliefs like "God is speaking to me," "God has created all this," "God disapproves of what I have done," and "God is to be thanked and praised."[17] Here the pacifist epistemologist should chime in with "God disapproves of violence in any circumstances," supporting *that* claim with all the resources provided by Anabaptist peace-church theology.

Ironically, Pacifist Epistemology doesn't have the resources to give an account for why pacifists should give pacifist beliefs like (T) a positive epistemic evaluation. However, Reformed Epistemology *does* have the resources to explain why, epistemologically, (T) is a perfectly respectable belief — justified, warranted, and one that may even count as knowledge such that we can *know* that (T), provided the degree to which we hold (T) is firm enough. That is why Mennonite pacifists should be Reformed Epistemologists. For everybody has some epistemology, some standard for making epistemic evaluations about their beliefs. And standards, epistemological or otherwise, are like relationships — there's nothing wrong with having them as long as they're the right sort. But the standards of Pacifist Epistemology aren't the right sort, at least for pacifists who think that (T) is a justified and warranted belief — which is one clue that Pacifist Epistemology needs to be Reformed.[18]

Notes

[1] Obviously, a robust pacifism will require assent to more than just this negative prohibition, and will include adopting a proactive and intentional pursuit of peace.

[2] See Nancey Murphy's unpublished essay, "Traditions, Practices, and the Powers: A Radical-Reformation Epistemology." For a good summary and analysis of Murphy's epistemology, see chapter three of Chris Bystrom's unpublished MCS Thesis (Regent College, 2000).

[3] Chris K. Huebner, "Globalization, Theory and Dialogical Vulnerability: John Howard Yoder and the Possibility of a Pacifist Epistemology," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76.1 (January 2002): 49-62; Ted Grimsrud, "A Pacifist Way of Knowing: Postmodern Sensibilities and Peace Theology," in *Mennonite Life*, Vol. 56, no. 1 (March 2001).

[4] See Alvin Plantinga's *Warrant* trilogy: *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford, 1993); *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford, 1993), and *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford, 2000).

[5] Huebner, "Globalization," 49.

[6] Grimsrud, "A Pacifist Way of Knowing."

[7] See Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993, 2nd. ed.), especially Chapter Nine, for a discussion of control-beliefs.

[8] For example, well-known epistemologists Laurence BonJour, Alvin I. Goldman, and Alvin

Plantinga, in papers endorsing *a priori* knowledge and justification, each claim that even a belief held *a priori* such that it later may be revised could still be justified. See Laurence Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998, especially Chapter Four); Alvin Goldman, "A Priori Warrant and Naturalistic Epistemology," in *Philosophical Perspectives, 13, Epistemology*, James E. Tomberlin, ed. (London: Blackwell, 1999); and Chapter Six of Plantinga's *Warrant and Proper Function.*

[9] Grimsrud, "A Pacifist Way of Knowing."

[10] Says Locke: [M]an would be at a great loss, if he had nothing to direct him, but what has the certainty of true *knowledge.* [John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* Roger Woolhouse, ed. (New York: Penguin, 1997), IV.xiv.1.]

[11] See note 3 to the "Epistle to the Reader" in the Woolhouse edition of the essay.

[12] Further support against the notion that modern epistemology is intrinsically violent could be found in G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716) in his dialogical commentary on Locke. [G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1704]). Leibniz is specifically rejecting the use of philosophical discourse as a self-serving means to power and silencing detractors.

[13] Grimsrud, "A Pacifist Way of Knowing." Grimsrud's autobiographical revelations here show a blatant inconsistency in his thought, for in the same essay he both professes to reject abstract normative principles while presenting categorical abstract principles and definitions that are supposed to have normative force (see the block quote above (note 9) that shows Grimsrud's endorsement of the pacifist-foundationalist thesis).

[14] See Chapter Four of Plantinga's *Warrant: The Current Debate.*

[15] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, xi.

[16] *Ibid.*, 156.

[17] These examples are from Plantinga's "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" in *Nous* (1981): 41-51.

[18] Due to space limitations, the present form of my paper is without an important section — namely, one where I anticipate and respond to criticisms.

Discipleship Ain't Just about Jesus:
or
On the Importance of the Holy Spirit for Pacifists

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In this paper, my purpose is to contribute to a theological thickening of Mennonite pacifism. I will attempt to justify the negative claim that Jesus alone cannot provide adequate theological grounds for the practice of pacifism with the positive claim that the Holy Spirit has a radically important role in

equipping and leading Christians — individually and collectively — in the imitation of Jesus.[1]

The Problematic Christocentrism of *The Anabaptist Vision*
Legend has it that, while on his way to deliver the 1943 presidential address to the American Society of Church History, Harold Bender wrote the now famous *Anabaptist Vision*. In it, Bender outlines a variety of historical appraisals of Anabaptism which then lead up to a summation of Anabaptism's core: 1) Christian discipleship 2) voluntary church membership and 3) an ethic of love and nonresistance. Whether Bender meant merely to sum up his understanding of the Anabaptist tradition or not, these three beliefs became the normative thrust of Anabaptism for many of Bender's students, including John Howard Yoder.

In my reading, Bender's related claims that: 1) discipleship means the transformation of the individual believer's entire way of life should be fashioned after the teachings and example of Christ;[3] and 2) in the practice of an ethic of love, Anabaptists were neither mystics nor pietists "for they laid the weight of their emphasis upon following Christ in life," are defining moments within *The Anabaptist Vision*.[4] Now, Bender was occasionally the object of the young John Howard Yoder's disdain, but Yoder openly acknowledged that he owed his interest in, and understanding of, Anabaptism to Bender.[5] Their shared Christocentric emphasis is obvious in Yoder's very influential *The Politics of Jesus*.[6] *The Politics of Jesus* has in turn deeply influenced a variety of contributors to Anabaptist theology from Stanley Hauerwas to J. Denny Weaver.[7] Although these heirs of Yoder — and to some extent also of *The Anabaptist Vision* — have significant differences, they share the profound emphasis on a pacifism grounded almost solely in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

In recent years, however, there has been an upheaval of sorts in Anabaptism. Frustrations are surfacing, and the strong Christocentric emphasis, or perhaps the ramifications of that emphasis, are becoming problematic for unforeseen reasons. About ten years ago, Stephen Dintaman wrote a four-page article entitled "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision."[8] In it, he boldly stated that "the unfortunate result of teaching the Anabaptist vision was that it resulted in generations of students and church leaders learning some of the behavioral aspects of the Christian faith"[9] without experiencing what it means to have a vital and life-changing relationship with the crucified and risen Jesus. Inevitably, this result "contributed to our spiritual impoverishment."[10] In

the ensuing years, it became obvious that even if Dintaman's assessment was not applicable in all contexts, it had certainly hit a nerve. Evidence can be found in the outpouring of support for his conclusion in a series of articles published in the *Conrad Grebel Review* three years later.[11] Dintaman is not alone, and A. James Reimer also speaks for various other Mennonites when he suggests that the *Vision*'s trajectory of the strong emphasis on the ethical, as seen in Yoder and his heirs (particularly J. Denny Weaver), seems to have become merely a form of ethical reductionism.[12]

Since Dintaman sounded the alarm nearly ten years ago, small steps have been taken to address the "spiritual impoverishment" of contemporary Anabaptism. Cornelius J. Dyck has gathered a collection of sixteenth-century writings on the spiritual life in Anabaptism.[13] Arnold Snyder has declared that "the most pressing theological need in our church is the cultivation of a spirituality and worship life that supports nonviolent discipleship."[14] James Reimer has begun articulating what it means to ground the moral claims of Jesus *and* the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit in the very nature and person of God.[15] Duane Friesen has provocatively articulated a theology of culture within a Trinitarian framework. All these efforts address the insufficiencies of Anabaptist theological reflection of the last half-century that have given rise to an "impoverished spirituality."[16] In the remainder of this paper, I too will attempt to contribute to this *ressourcement* and renewal, but I will limit my contribution to the multi-faceted relationship between the Holy Spirit and the performance of pacifism.[17]

Two Suggestive Resources for Rediscovering the Holy Spirit
I will limit myself to two resources that are least problematic for discussion amongst ourselves: Scripture and the sixteenth-century pioneers of Anabaptism.[18]

1. The Bible. Anyone acquainted with Mennonite theology knows that the Sermon on the Mount (preferably Matthew's account) has played the defining role in our self-understanding, especially the parts about turning one's cheek and loving one's enemies.[19] These strong ethical injunctions have also found their place within the rubric of Isaiah's eschatological vision of the time when people will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks"; when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."[20] I have no intentions of rejecting these pillars of Anabaptist theology and practice, yet there is a certain deficiency here. It lies in the neglect of the role that the Holy Spirit has in bringing about

peace — both a life of peace and the final eschatological peace.

Perhaps the easiest place to begin is in the letter to Galatians, where Paul outrightly states that peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit.[21] And, along with our emphasis on imitating Jesus, we should also consider Paul's assertion to the Corinthians that no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.[22] It seems logical, then, that attempts to live as if "Jesus is Lord" cannot be accomplished except by the Holy Spirit, which would include turning one's cheek and loving one's enemy. Even further, John's gospel also reports Jesus saying that the Spirit "will guide you into all the truth. . . . He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you."[23] If nothing else, this passage seems to indicate that if we want to live in the truth of Jesus Christ, we can accomplish this only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We can also examine the role of the Spirit in broader kingdom terms. Paul, in Romans, claims that the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.[24] The broader narrative for contextualizing this might again be located in Isaiah, where the peace of God's reign is foretold to Israel:

> For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted . . . *until a spirit from on high* is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. *The effect of righteousness will be peace*, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.[25]

Apparently the peace in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, is not limited to either the already or the "not yet," but is vital to the peace of the kingdom at all times.

One might argue that I have merely juxtaposed a variety of biblical texts abstracted from their narrative context, causing nothing but confusion in the process. I acknowledge that much more could and should be done in interpreting these passages individually and in their appropriate narrative and theological contexts. However, it is hard to ignore their combined force and the ramifications they might have for the topic at hand.

2. The Early Anabaptists. Turning to the sixteenth century, we should probably not be surprised that the Holy Spirit figures prominently. One aspect of the Christian life in which the Spirit particularly applied was in spiritual

regeneration. C. J. Dyck reminds us that the experience of "new birth" was the dynamic cause of early Anabaptism, with the Scriptures as the formal root cause and the Holy Spirit as the enabling power.[26] Perhaps no one articulated this position as clearly as Dirk Philips. Writing on regeneration, Philips claims that "it is clear that the new birth is actually the work of God in a person through which they are born anew out of God through faith in Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit." Invoking familiar biblical motifs, he argues that one must be washed through the bath of the new birth in the Word, and be transformed through the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Summing up in strongly Trinitarian terms, he declares that the children of God are those who are "born-again out of God the heavenly Father through Christ Jesus and are renewed and sanctified through the Holy Spirit, who have become participants of the divine nature, of the being of Jesus Christ, and of the character of the Holy Spirit."[27] In these passages, the Holy Spirit is integral in bringing about inner transformation, in the process of becoming a Christian. Yet is this merely an "inner" transformation?

A second role that the Spirit plays is that of bringing about external works. Pilgram Marpeck sketches the thorny transition, and although there still are latent problems here, his insights are very instructive. In 1545 he wrote that "According to the measure of the internal working of the Holy Spirit, [the Spirit also] leads to the external forgiveness of sin and our external improvement, teaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper showing love to all people." Advancing his claim even further, he argues that those who are born again in Christ, according to the inner working of the Holy Spirit, are those who are aglow with love.[28] Marpeck appears to provide us with a precedent for reconsidering the supportive role of the Holy Spirit in bringing forth external improvement, love, and, in short, all that is required for imitating Christ.

Even this is not all our early theological ancestors have to offer. In *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, C.J. Dyck conveys a profound writing by an anonymous author that is unsurpassed in elaborating the importance of the Holy Spirit. It justifies citing at some length:

> [The Holy Spirit] also shows us the Savior Jesus Christ, proclaims
> the gospel of grace to us, that is repentance and forgiveness of
> sin in his name. It is he who moves and encourages us to confess
> our sins, to have sorrow and remorse over them, mourn over them

with tears, that we long for Christ, the healer and forgiver, with all our heart, and teaches us to pray fervently, as he is called the Spirit of grace and the law in the prophets. . . . He kindles the fire of the love of God in a believing heart, enlightens and strengthens what is timid and weak, warms and heats what is cold and frozen before God, and comforts what is sad and troubled because of sin. He gathers the faithful together into holy fellowship, gives them one heart and mind, uniting them through Christ in untarnished brotherly love, accepts them as his children and heirs in the kingdom of God.[29]

Is this spiritually impoverished Anabaptism? I doubt it. I do not want to idealize the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, but if the substance of these writings could also have been transmitted within *The Anabaptist Vision*, we might not be facing the challenges we are today.[30] But, as the saying goes, better late than never.

Moving Forward: Beyond the Inner/Outer Dualism[31]

The "inner/outer" dualism in Anabaptist theology and practice has a wide variety of permutations that can take the form of either spirituality versus ethics, or pietism versus fundamentalism, or Spirit versus Jesus. In all of these, Christianity is divided into an either/or. Either it is about one's internal transformation or it is about following Jesus; either it is about spirituality or it is about ethics; either it is about experiences or it is about dogmatic correctness.[32] Now, perhaps there was, and might still be, a time necessitating extreme emphasis on one end of this dualism, but I do not admit that a choice must be made between either side. There simply is not an either/or.

I have tried to show that the Holy Spirit is active in enabling and guiding a Christian in the so-called external sphere, while noting the corollary: Jesus is just as important in effecting one's inner transformation. And, as more commonly assumed, the Holy Spirit is active in regeneration and Jesus is important in demonstrating Christian behavior. Yes, we inevitably will continue to speak of inner transformation and external evidences as logically, and perhaps even chronologically, discrete events, but it seems that we should do so only tentatively and provisionally, for these are separated only at our peril. This conclusion is not merely theoretical, for it has strong ethical ramifications that go right to the heart of the problem with *The Anabaptist Vision*.

Essentially, Dintaman's criticism of *The Anabaptist Vision* is that it

has become merely a form of ethical reductionism, and I think he is right on this. *The Vision* ends up being concerned only with behavioral aspects of discipleship, especially following Jesus' ethic of love and nonresistance. To get beyond this problem it is not enough to limit the discussion to a personal relationship with the crucified and risen Jesus.[33] We must broaden our theological lens to allow the role of the Holy Spirit to come into view. We must see how our own striving is not enough, how the Holy Spirit proclaims the gospel of grace to us, strengthens those who are timid and weak, and is actively working to bring about God's reign of peace. In short, we must see that all our striving to imitate Christ is simply not merely *our* striving, and any success in doing so is not merely *our* success; and that we are now even in a position to acknowledge the task of imitating Christ is not merely a product of *our* collective wisdom or foresight. Is this an internal or an external matter? It seems both internal and external: it is about spirituality but also about ethics. And, as we have seen in the resources, it is about the intricate, indissoluble relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

      Mennonite discipleship — and its attendant pacifism — is historically and theologically rooted deeply in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. But, Mennonite discipleship is also rooted in a rich polyphonic theological tradition that contextualizes and supplements this foundation. It is my hope that we can begin to rediscover these other elements of our tradition. Who knows, perhaps we might discover we are not so impoverished after all.

Notes

[1] Unfortunately, these claims already exhibit a flawed attempt, for to truly address the issue a full Trinitarian context is necessary. Within this limited context, I will attempt only to provide suggestive comments on the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Note that I include pacifism when I refer to discipleship or imitation of Christ.

[2] See Harold S. Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1944).

[3] *Ibid.*, 20.

[4] *Ibid.*, 33.

[5] See Albert N. Keim's excellent account of the occasionally tempestuous relationship between Bender and Yoder in his biography of Bender, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1998), 450-71.

[6] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

[7] See for example Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*

(Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); and J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

[8] Stephen F. Dintaman, "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision," *Conrad Grebel Review* 10.2 (Spring 1992): 205-208.

[9] *Ibid.*, 205.

[10] *Ibid.*, 206.

[11] See Stephen F. Dintaman, "Reading the Reactions to 'The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision,'" *Conrad Grebel Review* 13.1 (Winter 1995): 2-10; and J. Lorne Peachey, "Few Articles Rival This One: Responses to Dintaman in the *Gospel Herald*," *Conrad Grebel Review* 13.1 (Winter 1995): 10-14. Hauerwas criticizes Dintaman for leaning too close to pietism, a direction that will, in Hauerwas's estimation, undermine the practices that are the core of Anabaptism. See "Whose Church? Which Future? Wither the Anabaptist Vision?" in *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 74-75.

[12] See A. James Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2001), 248.

[13] Cornelius J. Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism: Classic Devotional Resources* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1995).

[14] Arnold Snyder, "Reflections on Mennonite Uses of Anabaptist History," *Mennonite Peace Theology: A Panorama of Types*, ed. J. R. Burkholder and Barbara Nelson Gingerich (Akron, PA: MCC Peace Office, 1991), 85.

[15] Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology*, 271.

[16] Although I will employ this term for now, I find it problematic. Later in this paper I will outline why it has proven problematic.

[17] As indicated by the numerous contributions cited above, there are many ways to address Anabaptist spirituality. By focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit, I do not mean to preclude these other efforts but to supplement them by addressing a disconcerting lacuna in theological reflection.

[18] Although I take the easy path in this context, much is to be gleaned from other more equivocal sources as well. It will just take a bit more work.

[19] Matt. 5:38-48.

[20] Isaiah 2:4 (NRSV).

[21] Gal. 5:22. In the ensuing verses, Paul also states that those who belong to Jesus Christ are the same who live by and are guided by the Spirit (Gal. 5:24-25).

[22] 1 Cor. 12:3.

[23] John 16:13-14. Here I would begin to articulate Jesus' own acknowledgement of the importance of the Holy Spirit for discipleship.

[24] Romans 14:17.

[25] Isaiah 32:14-17 (emphasis mine).

[26] Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, 52.

[27] Dirk Philips, "The New Birth." Cited in Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, 58-59.

[28] Cited in Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, 83. For an excellent summary of Marpeck's contribution to this discussion, see C. Arnold Snyder, "An Anabaptist Vision for Peace: Spirituality and Peace in Pilgram Marpeck," *Conrad Grebel Review* 10.2 (Spring 1992):187-203.

[29] Cited in Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, 75.

[30] In this connection, I am surprised that Guy Hershberger's *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* does not receive attention, for he clearly articulates the need for a renewed vitality in the spiritual life of twentieth-century Mennonites, and he instructively points to the early Anabaptists for this reason. Hershberger fleshes out many things that Bender's *Vision* presumes or ignores, and it is too bad that Hershberger's work has fallen out of circulation. See Guy Franklin Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981), 255-60.
[31] Consider also the individual/community and the Church/world dualisms.
[32] Even Hauerwas, with his strong emphasis on practice, seems inadvertently to accept this dualism in his response to Dintaman's critique of *The Anabaptist Vision*.
[33] This is not all that Dintaman recommends, but it seems to be the central idea he wishes to elevate. See Dintaman, "Spiritual Poverty," 206.

Jesus and Apostolic Authority

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In his discussion of Romans chapter 13 in *The Politics of Jesus*, John Howard Yoder addressed the contrast that many people have seen between Paul's view of the state in that text and "the contrary duties which otherwise would seem to follow from Jesus' teaching and example."[1] Yoder raised the issue in order to argue that Romans 13, properly understood, is very much in line with the teachings and example of Jesus. But, if only to argue against the need for taking the step, Yoder also stated that, if there were such a contrast between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Paul, "there might well be some good reasons to stand with Jesus against Paul."[2]

I will attempt to present one such reason — namely that the historical Jesus seems to have reserved teaching authority for himself and thus seems not to have bestowed it upon any of his followers. I will also suggest some implications for the future of Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship if Jesus did, as I will argue, retain for himself the authority to speak for God.

Historical study cannot tell us whether or not Jesus is Lord. However, by weighing sources and providing context, methodologically sound historical study can potentially clarify the content of Jesus' message and actions. In making my argument, I will use the methodological approach common to most current

Jesus scholars. I am an adherent of the methods of the school that includes scholars such as E. P. Sanders, John Meier, Geza Vermes, and Paula Fredriksen, and thus I am *not* in alliance with the methods of the Jesus Seminar where their methods differ.[3] And, of course, any historical argument, especially regarding an ancient figure for whom we have as few sources as we do for Jesus, involves degrees of probability rather than certainties. Now, on to the case for believing that Jesus probably did not see himself as delegating teaching authority to anyone.

First, we may be fairly confident that Jesus saw himself as having teaching authority as God's special spokesperson at a crucial moment in history — as the prophet of the God of Israel at the dawn of a new age.[4] As Sanders has put it, Jesus "regarded himself as having full authority to speak and act on behalf of God." As such, and in contrast to Jewish scribes, Jesus did not appeal to Scripture as the basis of his authority but rather presented his authority as unmediated.[5] We may also be confident that Jesus designated a group of twelve followers around himself.[6] That Jesus sent his twelve followers to spread his message is likely.[7] Each of those claims is worthy of extended discussion, but for purposes of this argument, I will simply assume them — referring those interested in them to my endnotes and to the secondary literature.

The question on which I want to focus is whether Jesus in some sense authorized the Twelve — or his followers more generally — to be, like him, spokespeople for God. Did Jesus grant at least some of his followers authority to be prophets, in a sense, themselves? I will argue that Jesus probably did not do so, and that only the Gospel of Matthew even implies any such authorization.

More than on anything else, the authority of the New Testament canon is based on apostolic authority, authority that many believe Jesus gave certain of his followers to speak decisively about him and his significance. At least some in the early church assumed that Jesus did pass his teaching authority, his prophetic office, to certain of his followers; that though Jesus himself wrote nothing, he commissioned the apostles as spokespeople for God in their own right, whose words others could receive as definitive.[8]

The word "apostle" implies one who has been sent on a mission. Even if Jesus really did call the Twelve an Aramaic equivalent of "apostles," while the title implies that those so designated *are* sent, it does not imply the authority their words are assumed to carry.[9] To explore the authority question, I will take the Synoptics one by one.

1. Mark described the naming of the Twelve in 3:14-15.[10] He then stated that Jesus chose them "in order that they might be with him and that he might send them out [*apostello autous*] to *proclaim* and to have *authority* to cast out demons."[11] When he later sends them on a mission, the Markan Jesus is again specifically said to give the Twelve "authority" — and again, it is specifically authority over unclean spirits (6:7). In describing what happened during their mission, Mark wrote that the apostles "proclaimed that all should repent," in addition to casting out "many demons" and anointing "with oil many who were sick and cur[ing] them" (6:13). In reviewing their mission after their return, Mark wrote that the apostles told Jesus "all that they had done and taught" (6:30). Thus, although Mark emphasized that the Twelve proclaimed and taught during their mission, and although he stated that Jesus explicitly gave them "authority" to cast out unclean spirits, Mark never used authority language to describe the *teaching* component of their mission.

Mark was familiar with the concept of teaching authority. He said that Jesus had it. At the opening of his Gospel he tells us that the crowds were amazed by the authority with which Jesus taught. In Capernaum, the people in the synagogue "were astounded at [Jesus'] teaching, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (1:22). The scribes presumably understood themselves — and were understood by the people — as *interpreting* an authoritative teaching rather than teaching authoritatively themselves. A question is whether Mark understood the proclamation of the Twelve to correspond more closely either to Jesus' teaching "with authority" or to the teaching of the scribes, who did not claim to speak directly for God. From Mark's descriptions of Jesus and the Twelve teaching, the latter seems more likely.

Mark in fact undermined any claim of the infallibility of the Twelve in his depictions of their frequent misinterpretation of Jesus' words and actions.[12] Mark describes these misunderstandings of Jesus as coming *after* the Twelve's preaching mission (6:7-13). Therefore, Mark in no way implied that, by the time he sent them out to preach his message, Jesus had ensured that the Twelve's understanding of the kingdom of God was dependable.

2. Luke generally followed Mark.[13] One difference is that Luke portrayed the disciples much more positively, omitting most of the negative Markan material. Thus Luke does not follow Mark in implying that the apostles would be likely to define the gospel incorrectly. [14] However, regarding the issue at hand, Luke also followed Mark by not presenting Jesus giving *teaching*

authority to the Twelve.

Luke also moved beyond Mark in having Jesus describe a future governing role for the Twelve. In an ambitious promise of future *governing* authority, the Lukan Jesus promises the disciples a ruling place in the coming kingdom. If the Lukan Jesus saw himself as ruling in God's stead, he seems to have envisioned the disciples as his future court of officials, saying, "I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (22:28-30). A future authority to govern under the direction of Jesus seems to have been in mind here.[15] However, this judging role is still not authority to define the gospel — to speak decisively for God. Therefore, we can say that the Gospels of Mark and Luke do not assert that Jesus passed his teaching authority to any of his followers.

3. The book of Matthew, however, is a different story, and the strongest claims that Jesus gave teaching authority to his followers rest on Matthean material alone.[16]

Matthew generally followed Mark on the points already covered,[17] portraying Jesus as having prophetic teaching authority while having Jesus give the Twelve authority to heal and exorcise and a commission to "proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'" (Matt. 10:7). As in Mark and Luke, no *authority* is explicitly given to preach in a definitive way equivalent to Jesus' own style. Matthew also followed Mark in presenting the Twelve as having unreliable perceptions of Jesus' teachings and purposes. And with Luke, Matthew included the previously mentioned promise that "when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (19:28).[18] Again, this saying depicts the Twelve ruling under Jesus in the new age and is an expectation of great authority indeed, but it is governing authority for the future age — not teaching authority for the present.

We now turn to the Matthean passage that arguably presents Jesus bestowing teaching authority on his followers — or at least on one of them. In his account of Peter's confession of Jesus as messiah, Matthew followed Mark. But after Peter's confession, Matthew added three verses in which Jesus singles out Peter for a special role in the church:

> Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter [*Petros*], and on this rock [*petra*] I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound[19] in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:17-19)

Because I think the evidence is strong that Jesus never actually said these things, I will assume, for the sake of argument, that Matthew understood this passage to say that Jesus gave some sort of binding teaching authority to Peter. In fact, I suspect that Matthew probably did intend the passage that way.

Does this saying of the Matthean Jesus, or any part of it, likely go back to Jesus himself? These words appear only in Matthew and yet are attached to a pericope Matthew received from Mark, so one immediately suspects them of being Matthean creations. Their single attestation is a major point against them. However, because Mark can be reasonably suspected of an anti-Twelve bias, that he suppressed such material is possible.[20] Luke could have simply depended on Mark's omission.

Some have detected Aramaic influences in this passage.[21] However, even if so, not only Jesus but most of his early followers spoke Aramaic, so an Aramaic background to the saying is not strong evidence that the saying goes back to Jesus.[22]

The use of the word *ekklesia* in 16:18 is a major red flag. It is almost certainly terminology from a later time. In all four Gospels, only this passage and an almost certainly anachronistic reference in 18:17 put the word "church" in the mouth of Jesus. Jesus could have used a word translated this way,[23] but it is very unlikely that he did so, because if he had used an equivalent of the favorite early Christian term for their communities, we would expect more than just these two Matthean examples. All things considered, that the future *kingdom* is the theme of this passage counts strongly against it going back to Jesus.[24]

Peter's leading role both in this passage and after the resurrection could cut either way. One can imagine that supporters of Peter in the early church might have created legends around him that emphasized his special role among the followers of Jesus. Even apart from this passage, the Gospel

of Matthew elevates Peter in a way the other Gospels do not.[25] On the other hand, Peter does seem to have taken the leading post-Easter role among the disciples.[26] That Jesus designated Peter as such before his crucifixion is not implausible. Somehow the early Christians, several of whom had also been followers of Jesus, got the idea that Peter should lead them.

On the whole, however, I think the evidence against Matt. 16:17-19 going back to Jesus — a single attestation of a saying that would have been important to most early Christians, anachronistic language about the church, Matthew's general tendency to elevate Peter, a post-Easter concern for leadership roles after Jesus — these things outweigh the evidence in favor of authenticity. I therefore regard it as unlikely, though not impossible, that Jesus really said something along the lines of Matt. 16:17-19.

Because that passage is the only one in the Synoptic Gospels in which Jesus could be reasonably understood to bestow teaching authority on his followers, I therefore conclude that the answer to Did Jesus authorize the Twelve to be spokespeople for God? is, Probably not. Though he seems to have envisioned the Twelve ruling under him in the coming kingdom, is likely to have sent them out to preach, and may have explicitly authorized them to heal and cast out demons, Jesus is unlikely to have in some sense authorized them to be God's spokespeople — prophets, in a sense, themselves. The difference in teaching authority between a prophet's messenger and the prophet himself is a great one. Jesus seems likely to have reserved the latter role for himself.

Implications for Future Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship

If, as seems most likely, Jesus did not bestow teaching authority on any of his followers, historical Jesus research becomes even more important theologically. The differences between what Jesus actually did and said, and what his followers attributed to him and said about him, become differences between what should carry authority for Christians and what need not. That difference in authority should have some significant implications for doing theology and for priorities in biblical research.

In biblical study, an obvious priority should be that Mennonites pay close attention to and join the scholarly quest for the historical Jesus. Because a significant stream of Mennonites is inclined to locate theological authority in the teachings and actions of Jesus rather than necessarily in Scripture as a

whole, we may have the needed theological energy for a focus on historical Jesus research. I have tried to show how a focus on Jesus rather than Scripture is an approach more consistent with Jesus' own approach. In any case, I hope energetic research into the historical Jesus will be a high priority in future Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship.

Regarding decisive theological authority as Jesus' alone should also encourage Mennonite scholars who work with the Bible to study New Testament authors as writers with distinct theological perspectives, rather than feeling the need to harmonize the whole New Testament to fit with our understanding of Jesus. Locating authority in Jesus alone may give us more permission, for example, to understand Paul as pointing in a different direction from Jesus on a certain point. That is, if Paul is not authoritative, we may be more likely to let Paul be Paul, with the possibility of just disagreeing with him rather than trying to get him to endorse our views.

Another implication of locating teaching authority in Jesus alone would regard how we base our systems of theology and ethics. It would mean going even further than John Howard Yoder went in *The Politics of Jesus*. For, in that book Yoder not only argued that the rest of the New Testament agreed with Jesus on the issues at hand but he also used the Gospel of Luke uncritically. Perhaps unintentionally, what Yoder wrote was in important ways less *The Politics of Jesus* than it was *The Politics of Luke*.[27] Truly Jesus-based ethics and theology will draw on the best of historical Jesus research to distinguish between Jesus and the Gospel writers, where that distinction is important. Perhaps such a theological approach will regard the Gospel of John, Paul's letters, the rest of the NT, and the rest of the Synoptic material as potentially illuminating commentary on the reign of God as made known in the teachings and actions of Jesus, but not as authoritative. And then it will use all the tools of theology and ethics to develop systems based on Jesus' teachings and actions as determined by methodologically sound Jesus research, recognizing always that historical work invariably deals with degrees of probability rather than certainty. I am not at all sure what theological such efforts will look like, but it would be exciting to see them.

In addition, taking historical Jesus research seriously and locating authority in Jesus alone should encourage all of us current and future scholars to give attention to our language about Jesus. For example, it should stop us from quoting the Jesus of the Gospel of John as though he were Jesus.

Sometimes, people talk as though only the fringe scholars of the Jesus Seminar discount John as a source for Jesus' sayings, when the fact is that almost no serious Jesus scholars regard the Gospel of John as a reliable source of Jesus' sayings. Taking historical Jesus scholarship seriously should also lead us to distinguish between the historical Jesus and the Jesuses of the Synoptic Gospels. Taking care to use adjectives like "the Matthean Jesus" and "the Johannine Jesus" might be a good discipline when we are not referring to the historical Jesus but to Jesus the literary character in a Gospel.

Alternatively, those who are not persuaded that Jesus retained for himself authority to define the reign of God may engage in this debate with their own arguments. But one thing we cannot do is operate on the unargued assumption that Jesus passed on his teaching authority, for he seems not to have done that.

Notes

[1] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 194-95.

[2] *Ibid.*, 214.

[3] For a brief description of sound methodology for studying the historical Jesus, see E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 301-34.

[4] Jesus seems likely to have understood himself as God's spokesperson — God's prophet. It seems to have been an implicit rather than explicit self claim (E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], 239 and 333), but no less strong for that. "We may be certain about [Jesus]: he thought he had been especially commissioned to speak for God" (E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* [London: Penguin Books, 1993], 239).

Martin Hengel says Jesus' "sovereign attitude toward the Law of Moses" is best described as "charismatic authority" (Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. James C. G. Greig [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981], 67-70). Geza Vermes notes that "in Palestinian Jewish parlance . . . a person wielding such authority is known as a prophet," which Jesus is said to call himself in Mark 6:4 and par. (Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 73).

[5] Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 238.

[6] The Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as giving a special designation to twelve men from among his followers. Mark 3:13-14 and Luke 6:12-13 describe Jesus calling out twelve from among a larger group. Matt. 10:1 implies that Jesus had only twelve disciples in the first place. The Gospels thus do not agree on the precise events surrounding Jesus' designation of the Twelve, and the different contexts they offer imply different understandings of the symbolism Jesus intended. There are even slight variations in their lists of the Twelve. The tradition that Jesus had twelve followers goes back at least to the time of Paul. It has its earliest testimony

in Paul's recounting of those to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared (1 Cor. 15:5).

[7] "[W]e do not know Jesus' purpose in calling [the Twelve]," and he seems to doubt whether Jesus sent out the Twelve on a mission (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 103). There is no evidence of a post-Easter mission of the Twelve to retroject into the life of Jesus, as they — as a recognizable Twelve — seem to have quickly faded from the scene after Easter (Meier, 158). This increases the likelihood that Jesus sent them on one. Meier (161) has also pointed to the phrase "fishers of men," which the Synoptic Jesus invited Simon and Andrew to become if they would follow him (Mark 1:17 and par.).

[8] Perhaps this understanding of "apostolic authority" is rooted especially in Paul's view of his own authority. At least, Paul's writings are the extant documents in which apostolic authority is first asserted — and asserted strongly. Paul made a point of identifying himself as "an apostle" sent by Jesus Christ. He was also willing to make explicit claim to the implied teaching authority that came with being regarded as an "apostle," acknowledging his tendency to "boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave . . ." (2 Cor. 10:8). Paul was not one of the Twelve. However, to identify himself as a person of authority in the church, the title he used was "apostle."

[9] The English word "apostle" is a transliteration of the Greek apostolos from the verb apostello, "to send out." To use the word as a title for those sent with a religious message and mission seems to have been a Christian innovation (Karl Heinrich Rengtorf, "Apostolo*s*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 408). More helpful than the etymology of the word may be the description in the Gospels of how Jesus sent them out. Only Matthew combined the naming of the Twelve, Jesus giving them some sort of authority, and Jesus sending them out on a mission (Matt. 10). Mark linked the naming of the Twelve with Jesus *commissioning* them to be sent out, but he then reserved their actual mission until after Jesus' rejection in Nazareth (Mark 3:13-19, 6:7-13). The Lukan Jesus named the Twelve before the Sermon on the Plain and he then gave them "power and authority" when he sent them out later (Luke 6:12-16, 9:1-6).

[10] Most ancient manuscripts have Mark adding that Jesus called them "apostles," but a variant reading with significant support omits that Jesus called them that. Imagining motives for omitting the title is sufficiently difficult to doubt the mention of "apostles."

[11] The Markan Jesus did not actually send them out at this point, but only later, after the people of Nazareth did not respond to him with faith (6:7-13).

[12] When Jesus tells them to "beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod," the Markan Twelve misunderstand his comments to relate to their own concern that they have forgotten to bring bread on their boat trip. This confusion led to an extended discussion about Jesus' ability to take care of their needs, in which an exasperated Jesus suggested that their "hearts [are] hardened," that they "have eyes, and fail to see," and that they simply "do . . . not yet understand" (Mark 8:17-21). In an even less flattering portrayal, Mark depicted Peter as "rebuking" Jesus for foretelling his (Jesus') imminent execution. Jesus is said to respond, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mark 8:32-33).

[13] Luke agreed with Mark in seeing Jesus as teaching with "authority." He also followed Mark in presenting Jesus as sharing with the Twelve his authority over demons and sickness, and in describing Jesus sending the Twelve "to proclaim the kingdom of God" (9:2).

[14] It is probably a conscious contrast to Mark. Luke omitted the confusion about yeast and bread — and Peter's rebuke of Jesus and Jesus' scolding reply.

[15] The Matthean parallel is discussed below.

[16] Since neither Mark nor Luke made the claim that Jesus did any such thing, there is no need to test the historical value of their versions — unless one suspects that they would conceal it. One can imagine that Mark was capable of doing just that as part of his agenda of portraying the disciples negatively. Less clear would be the motives of Luke, who so favorably described the preaching of Peter and "the apostles' teaching" in the early Jerusalem church (Acts 2:14-42).

[17] Matthew placed the reaction of the crowd at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:28-29). Thus the Matthean crowds contrasted the teaching of Jesus with the that the scribes, the difference being that Jesus taught with authority. For the Matthean Jesus, however, lack of authority on the part of the scribes did not seem to invalidate their teaching. In a passage with no parallel in Mark or Luke, the Matthean Jesus refers to scribes in a positive way and implied that the best scribes are also followers of Jesus (Mat. 13:52-53).

[18] This saying, a slight variation of the one in Luke 22:30, is likely — for reasons of the criteria of embarrassment and discontinuity — to go back to Jesus (Meier, 137).

[19] This verb and the parallel verb later in the sentence are in the perfect tense but traditionally translated as futures. Since the future tense implies a different meaning, I alter the NRSV here to use an English perfect.

[20] Bultmann suspected Mark of suppressing traditions that were more Jewish and pro-Peter in order to favor Pauline Hellenistic Christianity (Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh [Oxford: Blackwell, 1963], 258.)

[21] Simon was certainly known as "Cephas"/ "Peter." The play on Peter's name works a bit better in Aramaic, in which "kepha" would be both the name "Cephas" and "rock," whereas in Greek, the words are not identical: petros/petra. That the play on words works better in Aramaic may suggest the tradition is, at least, pre-Matthean (Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfield, and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973], 90-91). Some suggest that the reference to "binding" and "loosing" is a Semitic parallelism, suggesting a pre-Matthean history (Brown, et al. 95-96).

[22] See Sanders and Davies, 333-34.

[23] The LXX used it over a hundred times, almost always to translate the Hebrew qahal — "assembly." There are Aramaic equivalents Jesus could have used (K. Schmidt, "Ekklesia," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 525-27). A word translated as ekklesia might simply refer to a group of followers and need not imply a more structured community life (F. V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* [London: A. & C. Black, 1960], 201). Ekklesia was a sufficiently commonplace word that Jesus certainly *could* have used a word translated that way. If he had a distinctive word for the community of his followers, we should not be surprised if that word — or its Greek equivalent — would endure in their vocabulary.

[24] What counts overwhelmingly against Jesus' use of a special word to designate the community of his followers is that no other records of his teaching attribute it to him. Ekklesia was how post-Easter Christians often labeled their communities. By my count, the word was used more than 100 times in the NT. It was *the* Greek word first-century Christians used as the label for

their communities of faith in Jesus. Yet only two verses in Matthew (16:18 and 18:17) put the word in Jesus' mouth, and both those sayings seem anachronistically to bring later issues of Christian churches into his earthly ministry. If the early Christians could have traced a word so important to them back to Jesus, we would expect them to have done so. That only Matthew did, and only in these two verses, is strong evidence that Jesus did not use a term easily translated as church.

[25] It is notable that 16:17-19 is not the only place in which Matthew added stories that single out Peter. To Mark's account of Jesus walking on water, Matthew added a story of Peter walking on water a bit himself (14:28-31). Matthew's pericope of the Temple Tax also features Peter prominently (17:24-27). Peter, in Matthew, is also the disciple who pushes Jesus to clarify the limits of forgiveness (18:21). Not necessarily favorable depictions, they do raise Peter to a prominence beyond his role in the other Gospels. Paul referred to some Christians who said of themselves, "I belong to Cephas" (1 Cor. 1:12). Early Christians who saw themselves as particularly Petrine would have had a clear motive to embellish Peter's role among the Twelve.

[26] In Gal. 1:18, Paul referred to his earliest meeting with Peter in a way that suggests that Peter was the most important Christian in Jerusalem in the early years (Luz, 358). According to Acts, Peter played the leading role among the Twelve — preaching publicly, healing handicapped people, being targeted by the Jerusalem priests, challenging disobedient church members, etc. Acts even reports the statements of the Twelve by saying, "Peter and the apostles answered . . ." (Acts 5:29).

[27] See Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, vol. 1 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1985), 284-88.

The *Sensus Fidei* and Mennonite Theology

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In Roman Catholic theology, the *sensus fidei* is a doctrine about the role of all believers in expressing the truth(s) of the Christian faith. The *sensus fidei*, literally the "sense of faith," has an important place in *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which marked a change in Roman Catholic ecclesiology towards a more active role for the entire church, including the laity, in the proclamation, authoritative teaching, and application of the gospel. It recognized more explicitly that the tradition, which mediates God's self-revelation, includes the living witness of ordinary people of faith. It enabled conversation about the "teaching authority

of all believers" in virtue of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. My paper asks whether Mennonites may fruitfully appropriate the conceptual framework of the *sensus fidei* in order to talk about our own living tradition.

Before proceeding further, I propose this working definition: *Sensus fidei* is "the capacity to recognize the intimate experience of adherence to Christ and to judge everything on the basis of this knowledge."[1] It is an experiential way of knowing and understood to be a gift of the Holy Spirit. While some writers use *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* interchangeably, those who note a distinction describe the latter as the content or expression of what is actually believed and the former as the gift enabling such belief.[2]

Sensus Fidei in the Roman Catholic Church

Under a "siege mentality," the Counter-Reformational Roman Catholic Church approached ecclesiology and revelation as questions of jurisdiction. The Roman Church, specifically the bishops and pope, asserted the authority to define doctrine (over against the *sola scriptura* of the Reformers). As the Papal States themselves were under physical attack, the First Vatican Council (1870) concerned itself with the jurisdiction of the pope vis-à-vis the bishops, and concluded that when the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, his statements are "of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, irreformable."[3] In this scheme, the value of a theological statement, nearly always a proposition, derived more from its source than from its content.[4] Such a view implied a sharp division of labor between the *ecclesia docens* (teaching church) and the *ecclesia discens* (believing church) with the clergy, especially the episcopacy, constituting the former and the laity the latter. For nineteenth-century theologian J.B. Franzelin, the teaching church plays the active role whereby bishops and pope propose, explain, and protect the faith. The *sensus fidei* of the believing church is strictly passive. It says "Amen" to authoritative teaching.[5] However, already at Vatican I a view which was to prevail at Vatican II, one that rejected a "pyramid" in favor of an ecclesial model of "concentric circles" which begin with the faithful, was gaining ground.[6] The dominant image of the church between the councils — "the mystical body of Christ" — was indicative of this more organic ecclesiology.

The ecclesiology of Vatican II was less concerned with polemics and jurisdictions than with mission in the world. It defined the church itself as a sacrament (rather than an institution which dispenses the sacraments), a

mystery, a communion, and as the "people of God." This latter image, the title of chapter 2 of *Lumen Gentium*, recognized that the church is not only a sacrament of grace but a recipient as well. Thus, the holiness and faithfulness of the church is not a static essence but the fruit of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Whereas the church as the "body of Christ" risks denying the sinful element of human community, as the "People of God" the church recognizes itself as a community elected by God for a covenantal relationship.

Accordingly, *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965), defined revelation as God's *self-disclosure,* "in order to invite and take [human beings] into fellowship with himself" (article 2). Revelation is not the communication of propositional truth but a constitutive dynamic of God's relationship with God's people. Joseph Ratzinger's commentary on *Dei Verbum* puts it this way: "The Council desired to express again the character of revelation as a totality, in which word and event make up one whole, a true dialogue which touches man in his totality, not only challenging his reason, but, as dialogue, addressing him as partner, indeed giving him his true nature for the first time."[7] The People of God is the addressee and transmitter of God's self-communication. Revelation and church are thus mutually implied in the concept of People of God.

The above discussion on the church and revelation sets the context for discussing infallibility, the most proximate concept within which the *sensus fidei* is located. Infallibility is a major ecumenical hurdle, not to mention a contentious issue within the Roman Catholic Church, because it immediately evokes papal infallibility. Yet, even *Pastor Aeternus*, the Vatican I document which defined the infallibility of some papal statements, placed such exercise within a larger framework of infallibility which Vatican II articulated well: the church (the People of God) is the recipient of the Holy Spirit's promise of preservation from fundamental error. Infallibility was a charism granted to the prophets, evangelists, and apostles who preached and recorded the Word of God in what we now know as Scripture. John 14:16-17 says that this Spirit of truth abides with the church. The church adheres to that foundational self-communication of God (Scripture) through interpretation and expression (Tradition) by the power of this same Spirit. This does not mean either that the church does not make mistakes, that its members are always faithful, that the Spirit's work is limited to the church, or that its work is obvious. Modestly, it affirms that the church is not just a social reality but also a spiritual one.

Without denying the failures of social groups and of individuals within those groups, infallibility speaks about the Spirit's abiding role in a covenantal reality: "[T]he Church's continued fidelity to the gospel is dependent on the prior fidelity of God to the Church."[8]

Infallibility in the first place attaches to the entire believing church — the church called into being in response to God's self-communication. Only secondarily, and only insofar as it defines and expresses the faith of the believing church, does infallibility attach to the teaching church, the bishops, and the pope (and, in various derivative ways, theologians). Patrick Hartin notes that even though Vatican I denied that papal statements are strictly dependent on popular or even episcopal assent, it affirmed that a pope cannot proclaim a new dogma but is limited to defining what already exists in the faith and life of the church; and thus, one interpretation goes, has an obligation to consult the faithful.[9] The acceptance or "reception" by the church of such a definition does not establish the truth of the statement but confirms the charism of infallibility.

The combination of more organic ecclesiology, historical consciousness about the development of doctrine, attention to the church's mission in the world, an increasingly active laity, and emphasis on the entire church as the recipient of the Holy Spirit's promise was the framework for a renewal of the concept of the *sensus fidei* leading up to Vatican II and beyond.[10] In the chapter, "People of God," and in an article (12) on the participation of the church in Christ's prophetic office, *Lumen Gentium* gave this theology of the *sensus fidei*:

> The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith [*supernaturali sensu fidei*] which characterizes the People of God as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, 'from the bishops down to the last member of the laity,' it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. For, by this sense of faith [*sensus fidei*] which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God's People accepts not the word of men but the very word of God (cf. 1 Th. 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life. All this it does under the lead of the sacred teaching authority to which it loyally defers.

Although it highlights an active role for the laity, it does not necessarily structure the laity *over against* the hierarchy. As John Burkhard points out, neither is it intended as a "pious exhortation to obedience on the part of the faithful" as might be suggested by the reference to loyal deference to teaching authority.[11] Rather, it enjoins specific actions such as prayer, study, discussion, commitment, and application to life that give doctrines specific content "from below." A specific interdependent relationship of hierarchy and laity is thus envisioned. James Heft suggests that a review of how the Church came to define the Marian Dogmas of 1854 (Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and 1950 (Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) shows a "dynamic process of faithful give-and-take between the bishops and the rest of the church."[12] In important (though not uncontroversial ways), the popes involved consulted the "faithful" and found these dogmas to be part of their faith in spite of ambiguous testimony in Scripture and the Tradition. The papal role was thus one of defining the de facto faith and piety of the church.

John Henry Newman claimed that in the preservation of orthodoxy against a majority of Arian bishops, "the divine dogma of our Lord's divinity was proclaimed, enforced, maintained, and (humanly speaking) preserved far more" the believing church than the teaching church.[13] A more negative and controversial example is the authoritative but not "infallible" prohibition of artificial contraception in *Humanae Vitae* (1968). The question is whether the fact that a majority of Roman Catholics do not agree with and/or follow this prohibition in practice[14] — that it has generally not been "received" — is indicative of a deficiency in the teaching. The professors at Catholic University subject to Vatican inquiry for their views on *Humanae Vitae* argue that the *sensus fidei,* including the sense expressed as dissent, is an important balance to "an *exclusive* teaching prerogative in the hierarchy," and, as a potential correction of error, is "an intrinsic element in the total magisterial function the church."[15] Controversy itself does not necessarily disqualify a doctrine from the competence of the *sensus fidei*. Since truth, not majority opinion, remains the key criterion, it is possible that prophetic words come to the church through an instinct of faith expressed by a minority.

Commentators seem to agree that concerns to which the *sensus fidei* might especially apply are those of immediate pastoral and practical concern. The "popular faith" of Marian devotion, for example, is discerned to contain an important theological insight about human response and cooperation with

God's grace.[16] Yves Congar speaks of the value of what "Christians declare by their behaviour." This refers both to everyday practical judgments as well as the witness of the Spirit of truth through martyrdom.[17] Burkhard argues that *Lumen Gentium*'s specification that the *sensus fidei* is concerned with application to the circumstances of life means that activity in the workplace, politics, economics, education, medicine, counseling services, etc. are as authentic channels as sacraments or preaching through which the Spirit proclaims the gospel.[18]

Who are the faithful are who are said to have this "sense"? While Congar speaks of *sensus fidei* "tend[ing] towards a consensus," unanimity is not necessarily its defining mark, since human grasp of truth is always partial.[19] The idea that polling members may be a way of gauging the *sensus fidei* is suspect, especially since it is difficult for such a method to determine whether the opinions expressed are rooted in secular culture or in a sense of faith. While it makes assessing the *sensus fidei* qualitatively more difficult, Avery Dulles maintains that "we must look not so much at the statistics, as at the quality of the witnesses and the motivation for their assent."[20] One quality of great importance is nurture and life in Christian community. On one hand, this criterion of "quality of witnesses" and emphasis on community life can lead to Thomas Dubay's assertion that only those accepting the teaching of the magisterium are the faithful.[21] On the other, Leonard Swidler uses the concept of *sensus fidei* to argue for the democratization of the Roman Catholic Church based on the sanctity of the individual conscience.[22]

Catholic discourse about the *sensus fidei* includes ecumenical considerations of the reformative power for the Church itself and for the enhancement of ecumenical fellowship. Incorporation of the Protestant emphasis on lay reading of the Bible may be an example of the former. Possibilities for the latter may be exercised on the basis of Vatican II statements which recognize the ecclesial quality of non-Roman churches, and which, according to Heft, enjoin the Roman Catholic church to take more seriously what other churches hold and to consult them in good faith before promulgating doctrine.[23] On the issue of contraception, he speculates, the official teaching is too "culturally bound" to medieval ideas of sexuality and ought to be modified by "the thinking and teaching of most of the rest of Christianity."[24] More positively, "the faithful" ought to be understood as all Christians, the entire People of God. The Spirit's preservation of this body from fundamental error

is not limited by denominational boundaries. Such an understanding would move the concept of infallibility further from a juridical definition (limited to Roman Catholic hierarchy) and towards the expression of the lived faith of the entire believing community.

Sensus Fidei in the Mennonite Church?

The language of the *sensus fidei* might stimulate Mennonite theology and practices in creative ways. As should be apparent, the *sensus fidei* is not a precisely defined instrument but rather yields a witness only in time and after thoughtful reflection. Thus, the immediate benefit may not be the expression of specific content, *sensus fidelium,* but rather new self-understandings realized in attempting the search. I will briefly mention four benefits from using this language, while also addressing potential concerns.

The *sensus fidei* turns our attention to the witness of the Holy Spirit, an important theological corrective for a Christocentric tradition. If we really mean that the Holy Spirit is at work, then we would benefit from this rich language in which to talk about it. We hold, for example, that baptism is public testimony about the Holy Spirit's work in an individual which at the same time incorporates the individual into a new humanity. While not denying the personal element, Mennonite theology would do well to reflect further on how it takes the promise of the Holy Spirit, especially the Spirit of truth, to abide with the *church*. Does it imply some notion of infallibility? Is the meaning of the promise "spiritualized"? Are the results inscrutable? Is there visible manifestation?

The difference in the practice of authority between Roman Catholics and Mennonites would greatly affect Mennonite appropriation of *sensus fidei* language. For Roman Catholics, the *sensus fidei* operates within a potentially dialogical polarity of laity and hierarchy, authority and conscience, or, more precisely, the faith of the entire People of God and those whose teaching office calls them to express, clarify, and define that faith. In the absence of clearly authorized *persons* over doctrinal matters, it may still be meaningful for Mennonites to talk about expressing the lived faith of the church in a decisive way. Here, I suggest that if we are neither Catholic nor Protestant, then a congregational style of authority which resides in face-to-face discernment among disciples who are also priests is amenable to *sensus fidei* concepts, while transforming them. Nevertheless, we can also ask whether Mennonites have an implicit "magisterium." What is the relation between doctrinal authority

and the ability of the church to hold particular beliefs and practices *qua* church? What would an analysis of the way in which H.S. Bender's expression of the "Anabaptist Vision" caught fire and was owned broadly within the church say about "authority" and "reception" in expressing the lived faith of the community? What is the relation of scholarship and authority in Mennonite practice? *Sensus fidei* vocabulary may stimulate new reflections on these issues.

A third benefit has more direct implications for Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship: closer attention to the "lived faith" of actual church practices and beliefs. Neither contemporary "authoritative" statements nor the writings of the sixteenth century necessarily express what is held at the concrete congregational level. While not ignoring those sources, discernment of the *sensus fidei* would push scholars to give more attention to accessing and expressing lived faith in a disciplined way (neither simply sociology nor pure subjective experience). Attending to worship formats, church outreach programs, justice initiatives, and baptismal candidates' confessions of faith are examples. Such expressions are not only the *result* of Bible reading and instruction but embodied judgments about the relationship of God-humanity-world which cannot be deduced from concepts and texts alone. Thus, they are a crucial source for theological reflection.[25]

Fourthly, ecumenical benefits to which I have already alluded would be relevant too in our appropriation. The insights of other Christian traditions and our own particular witness may be mutually commended on the basis of the *sensus fidei* rather than through denominationally negotiated statements. This would suggest that a Mennonite approach to ecumenicity properly moves from the grassroots to (possible) high level discussions rather than vice-versa. Mennonite theology must ask how the spiritual resources of another Christian tradition, translated into our own distinctive key, may enhance the conception and practice of our own living tradition.

Notes

[1] Zoltán Alszeghy, "The *Sensus Fidei* and the Development of Dogma," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, vol.1, ed. Rene Latourelle (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 147.
[2] For example, James L. Heft, "'Sensus Fidelium' and the Marian Dogmas," *One in Christ* 28/2 (1992): 112; Patrick J. Hartin, "*Sensus Fidelium*: A Roman Catholic Reflection on its

Significance for Ecumenical Thought," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 28 (1991): 76.

[3] *Pastor Aeternus*, chapter 4.

[4] Daniel J. Finucane, *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept in the Post-Vatican II Era* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996), 243.

[5] John Burkhard, "*Sensus fidei*: Meaning, Role and Future of a Teaching of Vatican II," *Louvain Studies* 17 (1992): 22.

[6] Charles E. Curran, Robert E. Hunt, et al., *Dissent In and For the Church: Theologians and Humanae Vitae* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1969), 96.

[7] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 3, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 172.

[8] Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium of the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 142.

[9] Hartin, "*Sensus Fidelium*: Ecumenical Thought," 79

[10] Cited in Avery Dulles, "*Sensus Fidelium*," *America* 155 (1986): 241. John Henry Newman, whose ideas posthumously influenced Vatican II, had discussed historical instances of the *sensus fidei* including the defense of Christ's divinity against the Arians, the confession of Mary as *theotokos*, and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

[11] Burkhard, "*Sensus fidei*: Meaning, Role, Future," 26.

[12] Heft, "'Sensus Fidelium' and the Marian Dogmas," 110.

[13] Cited in Heinrich Fries, "Is there a *Magisterium* of the Faithful?" in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx, eds., *The Teaching Authority of Believers* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1985), 87.

[14] "A recent survey claims that nearly 77% of Catholic wives were practicing birth control, 94% of whom were using methods condemned by the Church. It is reported elsewhere that only 29% of the lower clergy believe that artificial contraception is morally wrong. . . ." Joseph A. Komonchak, "*Humanae Vitae* and the Its Reception: Ecclesiological Reflections," *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 221. Statistics like this are contested by those who draw distinctions in such surveys in the degree of "commitment" to the church (i.e., "practicing Catholics").

[15] Curran, et al. *Dissent In and For the Church*, 86-87.

[16] Heft, "'Sensus Fidelium' and the Marian Dogmas," 117.

[17] Yves Congar, "Towards a Catholic Synthesis," in *Who Has a Say in the Church?* eds. Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 74.

[18] Burkhard, "*Sensus fidei*: Meaning, Role, Future," 30.

[19] Congar, "Towards a Catholic Synthesis," 74.

[20] Dulles, "*Sensus Fidelium*," 242.

[21] Cited in Finucane, *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept*, 393.

[22] Finucane, *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept*, 324-30.

[23] Heft, "'Sensus Fidelium' and the Marian Dogmas," 119.

[24] Hartin, "*Sensus Fidelium*: Ecumenical Thought," 85-86.

[25] There has been a surge in interest on "church practices." See *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, eds. James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you . . ."
(1 Cor. 11:23)

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Among the heirs of the Anabaptist movement, discussions on the role of "tradition" in the life of the church have tended to be framed in antagonistic terms. The polemic of Scripture over against tradition has deep historical roots in our movement, and continues to exert an influence in discussions of ethics, worship, and christology. The passage 1 Cor. 11:23-26, from which the excerpt above is quoted, may help to bring into focus a number of relevant variables related to a contemporary discussion of the role of tradition in Anabaptist worship and theology.

The Relationship between Scripture and Tradition
In the sixteenth century, there were at least two alternatives available within Protestant circles for imagining the relationship between Scripture and tradition. On the one hand, Andreas Karlstadt argued that faithfulness to the biblical word of God demanded the rejection of all inherited ecclesiastical traditions not explicitly affirmed in Scripture. On the other, Martin Luther argued that all those traditions not explicitly condemned in the Bible were lawful for Christian faith and praxis. Karlstadt and Luther parted ways due to disagreement over the use of traditional forms of worship in non-Roman churches. The liturgical ramifications of this decision can today be observed by comparing most Lutheran and Anabaptist worship services.

In opposition to all variations on the Protestant theme of *sola scriptura*, the Roman Catholic Church articulated a quite different understanding of the significance of its inherited ecclesiastical traditions. In opposition to the strenuous Protestant assertion of the sufficiency of Scripture, at the Council of Trent the Roman Church formulated what later came to be interpreted as a "two source" theory of divine revelation. In this understanding (which has frequently been rejected by contemporary Roman Catholics as a distortion of Trent's teaching), in addition to the explicit words of Scripture, there exists within the church a fund of information that is either undocumented or documented in non-canonical sources, upon which the hierarchy may later

draw to promulgate authoritative doctrines. Within Roman Catholicism there was a formal acknowledgement that the two sources could not contradict each other, but to many watching Protestants by means of this position the Roman Church seemed simply to issue itself a *carte blanche* to develop new traditions in whatever direction required by the exigencies of power politics, Aristotelian philosophy, or Marian piety.

More recently, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) has come up with its own description of the nature of Christian tradition. According to the 1963 WCC document "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions," debates about the authority of tradition are best framed in terms of "Tradition," "traditions," and "tradition." In the first case, "Tradition" refers to "God's revelation and self-giving in Christ, present in the life of the Church."[1] This "Tradition" may be understood to be substantially equivalent to the revelation in Christ provided in Scripture; or, as in the case of the Orthodox, it may also include the tangible forms by which the Christian faith itself has been passed down through time.[2] Later we read that "the content of Tradition cannot be exactly defined, for the reality it transmits can never be fully contained in propositional forms."[3] In contrast to the "Tradition" are those "traditions" which, in the diversity of forms of expression found in different communions, to varying degrees faithfully transmit the "Tradition."[4] Finally, "tradition" refers to the traditioning process *per se*, the means by which particular traditions, and through them aspects of the "Tradition," are transmitted from generation to generation.

In terms of contemporary Anabaptist reflection, John Howard Yoder's view of the role of tradition deserves mention. As Yoder recognizes, the question of tradition cannot be resolved by a simple rejection of any post-biblical development in Christian self-understanding, such as biblicism in a Karlstadtian mode, since the Bible itself affirms the reality of ongoing revelation in the Christian community (John 14:12-26; 16:7-15), and gives evidence of the attempts of first-century congregations to manage this reality (1 John 4:1ff; 1 Cor. 12:1ff.). Yoder affirms that

> There can very properly be forms of change to which the "biblicist" would not object, if they have about them the organic quality of growth from seed, faithful translation, or fecundation. . . . What is at stake is not whether there can be change but whether there is

such a thing as unfaithfulness.[5]

Yoder uses the image of a vine to assert the adequacy of Scripture to adjudicate the faithfulness of later developments in Christian tradition. Just as a vine may have branches growing in different directions, so too can there be legitimate diversity in the post-biblical development of Christian traditions. If, however, these branches are allowed to grow in whatever direction they please, the result is a choking of the vine and a reduction in its fruitfulness. Scripture may thus be asserted to be the root by which the church is able to judge when and where the pruning of a branch of tradition is necessary. "This renewed appeal to origins is not primitivism, nor an effort to recapture some pristine purity. It is rather a 'looping back,' a glance over the shoulder to enable a midcourse correction."[6] By taking this position, Yoder does not assume that the church will at any point exhaust the import of the Scriptures for the church's life. Rather, as new questions are raised and put to Scripture, the texts yield new perspectives. Yoder cites the development of liberation theology as one example of how posing new questions to the biblical texts allows "the same old data" to disclose new information.

This paper takes Yoder's understanding of the role of Scripture in adjudicating the faithfulness of ongoing revelation as its starting point, and seeks to apply this method to contemporary Mennonite understandings of the Lord's Supper in light of 1 Cor. 11:23-26. Since Yoder's approach requires discernment in each particular instance of the tradition's faithfulness to biblical concepts and trajectories, we shall try to determine whether new questions being raised in biblical studies confirm or problematize contemporary Mennonite eucharistic understanding.

Contemporary Mennonite Perspectives on the Lord's Supper

What, then, is the "contemporary Mennonite understanding" of the Lord's Supper? There is no such unified position, nor could we reasonably expect one, given the absence of a unified ecclesiastical authority in the Mennonite churches.[7] For our purposes it is adequate to note two opposing tendencies within contemporary Mennonite eucharistic theology.

Probably the most prevalent understanding of the "traditional" Mennonite position on the Lord's Supper may be summed up as "Zwinglian memorialism." A number of sixteenth-century Anabaptists argued strenuously against any notion

of a "real presence" in the Supper. Some did so on the basis of Ulrich Zwingli's exegesis (adopted from Cornelius Hoen) of the words of institution to mean "This signifies my body," while others leaned more heavily on the observation that, according to the biblical record, Jesus in his post-resurrection humanity is seated at the right hand of God. The memorialist view finds a contemporary analogue in the article on communion in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, where one reads that "communion . . . has always had only a symbolic meaning for the Anabaptists and Mennonites. . . . It was a memorial to the death of Christ and a means of the closest fellowship of the believers in Christ."[8] As in the sixteenth century, the article supports this interpretation of the Supper with the claim that it restores "the Biblical practice" of communion, presumably in contradistinction to the "un-Biblical" eucharistic views of the Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, and Lutherans, among others.

A different contemporary view, existing in considerable tension with the one just expressed, is found in the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* published by the now unified Canadian General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church in North America. While the memorial view remains represented within the twelfth article of this confession, one also finds the assertion that believers "relive" the event of Jesus' death and resurrection by celebrating a common meal together. Furthermore, the claim is made that "the supper re-presents the presence of the risen Christ in the church."[9] Surprisingly, no biblical rationale is provided to support this concept of the Supper "re-presenting" the presence of Christ.

Of course, it has been commonplace within certain ecclesial traditions to assert the reality of such a Christic presence in the Supper, based on a literal exegesis of Jesus' words of institution and on some of the post-resurrection experiences of Jesus experienced by his disciples, e.g., the road to Emmaus story. In Mennonite circles, however, the phrase "do this in remembrance of me" found in 1 Cor. 11:23-26 and Luke 22:15-20 has generally been seen to provide a kind of trump card in discussions of the "real presence" (or rather absence) of Jesus in the Supper. It is precisely on this point of intersection between the claim for Jesus' "real presence" in the Eucharist, and the apparently biblical view of the celebration of communion in psychological "remembrance" of Jesus Christ, that the role of Scripture and tradition will now be examined.

"Do this in remembrance of me . . ."

In 1 Cor. 11:24-25 the word generally translated as "remembrance" is the Greek word *anamnesis*, which word in turn is related to the Hebrew noun *zikkaron*, derived from the root *zkr*. As one commentator has observed, "there is probably no other single Hebrew word which has engendered so much debate among Christian sacramental and liturgical theologians in the second half of the twentieth century as the noun *zikkaron*, or rather its Greek equivalent, *anamnesis*."[10]

The groundwork for the important role which the term *anamnesis* has recently acquired in ecumenical and scholarly reflection was laid by a number of authors, especially Joachim Jeremias among biblical scholars and Gregory Dix among liturgiologists, but French Protestant theologian Max Thurian was chiefly responsible for its entry into ecumenical discussion through his influential book, *L'eucharistie: mémorial du Seigneur*, published in 1959. According to Thurian, *anamnesis* does not refer to a merely psychological act of remembering, such as seems presupposed in the framework of Zwinglian memorialism, but it is rather a term loaded with theological significance. In his view, *anamnesis* is used to describe a phenomenon by which past events are actualized in the present for the benefit of contemporary believers. For the Jewish people, this is what occurs during the Passover celebration and is the reason why in the modern seder one is told that "Every man in every generation is bound to look upon himself as if he personally had gone forth from Egypt."[11] It is this word, generally translated "memorial" by biblical scholars, that gives both the Passover seder and the Christian Eucharist their distinctive meanings. In the seder, the meal is given the meaning of an "actualization" of the deliverance of the people of God; in the Eucharist, it is Christ's sacrifice which is "actualized," with the result that Christ himself is made present in his sacrifice.[12]

Thurian's work has received fairly widespread support from biblical specialists such as P.A.H. de Boer, Willy Schottroff, and Brevard Childs. For example, Childs defines actualization as "the process by which a past event is contemporized for a generation removed in time and space from the original event."[13] This does not mean that Israel again experiences the Exodus, for this was a once-for-all event, but rather that by means of her tradition Israel is able to enter "the same redemptive reality of the Exodus generation. . . .

Because the quality of time was the same, the barrier of chronological separation was overcome."[14]

It is just this notion of "actualization," (or "re-presentation" as noted in the Mennonite *Confession* above), that has been enthusiastically embraced by a great many scholars and church leaders from a variety of denominations, and that was very influential in formulating the 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* (BEM) document by the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. As a result, the notion of "memorial" articulated by scholars such as Thurian and Childs has already played a large role in overcoming ecumenical impasses concerning the relationship between Christ's sacrifice and the Eucharist. Furthermore, a conviction exists that if agreement can be reached that the memorial of the Supper is "the living and effective sign of [Christ's] sacrifice," then there is hope that a shared understanding of the nature and significance of Christ's presence in the Eucharist may yet be possible. This is an extremely ironic turn of events for churches adhering to a "memorialist" understanding of the Lord's Supper, as they find that the passage and terminology they have been using to protect against a notion of the "real presence" have become the means by which other traditions are affirming just such a presence.

Nevertheless, the view of memorial actualization first presented by Thurian has not achieved universal acceptance within the scholarly community. Robert Brawley has questioned it for several reasons, including his doubting that the Lord's Supper was actually instituted during a Passover meal, and that in the LXX *mnemosunon* rather than *anamnesis* is used to translate *zikkaron*.[15] Thus, Brawley does not dispute the notion that in certain contexts *zkr* may involve actualization of the past, e.g., in the context of the Passover seder, but he does dispute claims for such an understanding of *anamnesis* in the New Testament accounts of the Lord's Supper. In addition, he rallies Markus Barth[16] in support of his skepticism of an apparently too-easy, and politically-driven, consensus on the meaning of *anamnesis*.

Unfortunately, the critiques of Brawley and Barth lose their force in light of observations by their colleagues. First, a large number of scholars affirm the significance of the Passover as a setting for understanding the significance of the Lord's Supper, quite apart from any direct historical linkage.[17] Also, even without a direct link to the Passover, *anamnesis* could carry a notion of actualization within the NT institution texts due to the cultic nature of the Supper, and the association of the actualization concept with

cultic acts in the OT in general. Second, it is not significant that in the Septuagint *mnemosunon* rather than *anamnesis* is used to translate *zikkaron* with reference to the commemoration of the Exodus, since the terms seem to function as synonyms.[18] Finally, Barth's arguments against a conviction in the "real presence" fail to engage the specific arguments of those linking the notion of "actualization" with that of *anamnesis*, and do not present a developed alternative to such an understanding of this term.

In this regard, the Jewish scholar Lawrence A. Hoffman presents a greater challenge to the "actualization" interpretation of *anamnesis* than do either Brawley or Barth. On the basis of an involved examination of post-biblical rabbinical, and to a lesser extent OT, writings, Hoffman establishes a carefully argued alternative to the view proposed by Thurian. Hoffman's view may be summarized as follows. The word normally translated as "remember" is better rendered as "to point out," and God's memory is thus actually God's attention being drawn by a variety of pointers, some of them liturgical.[19] From the human side and in the context of a liturgical celebration, these pointers remind the gathered congregation of God, his nature, and his deeds of salvation. From the divine side, they function as reminders for God, signposts to direct God's attention back toward God's own essentially merciful nature, and the promise of salvation implied therein.[20] Hoffman uses the charming simile of humanity being like children in a busy household, who use the liturgy as a means of obtaining and directing the attention of their busy parent. The end result of drawing God's attention in this way are effects in line with God's gracious nature, namely salvation and deliverance.

Hoffman draws the implications of his view for the Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper. In his view, Jesus' "Do this in memory of me" are words meant to accompany a ritual act, which as a whole functions as "a pointer to a pointer." Eating the bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus points to Jesus, who is himself the primary pointer, directing God's way toward merciful redemption. In the celebration of the Supper, Hoffman finds liturgy "as the Rabbis understood it, liturgy as *zikaron*, liturgy as memory, or better, as pointer, drawing God's attention to what matters."[21]

Roman Catholic scholar Fritz Chenderlin focuses on the meaning of the phrase "Do this in remembrance of me," or as he renders it, "Do this as my memorial." He argues that this phrase carries a sense of "reminding God," as well as reminding people. Very similar to Hoffman, he states that

one aspect of meaning of "memorial" is "that of a symbol — a word or thing or act — that is so said or placed or done as to attract the attention of the one who is meant to read it and thus turn his attention to the matter symbolized."[22] In the biblical texts cultic memorials are indeed thought to exert a "pressure" on God to act, but this is not magic or theurgy but "reminders of pressures God was thought to have put on *himself*, as by covenant."[23]

Thus, in the central cultic act of the Christian faith, the elements of the Lord's Supper must be seen to have the aspect of "reminding God" that the term "memorial" carries throughout the biblical narrative. The elements of the Supper remind God of his promises in Jesus Christ, who is portrayed in Paul's writings with concepts such as ransom, martyrdom, *akedah*, mercy seat, scapegoat, and sacrifice.[24] All of these images would be suitable ways of articulating the "reminding God" aspect of the Supper, but in the later tradition this Godward aspect came to be expressed exclusively in terms of sacrifice. This development represented a narrowing of the biblical concept of "memorial" and a reduction in the number of options available to the liturgical imagination by which to obey the Lord's "memorial" command.[25]

Chenderlin also addresses Thurian's concept of "actualization," apparently accepting Childs' definition of actualization as the "contemporization and making relevant older traditional materials."[26] Thus, there are forms of literary actualization in which one generalizes from the original biblical stories and makes the lessons from the original situation applicable in the present.[27] This kind of actualization can be safely assumed and universally recognized in contemporary Jewish and Christian communities, and in the biblical texts themselves. Therefore, the reality of the concept of actualization is not the issue. Rather the question is whether, apart from more commonly accepted forms of actualization such as literary actualization, the Scriptures provide evidence that "the later cult in Israel was not actualizing in any specially "cultic" way."[28]

Chenderlin suggests at least four kinds of cultic actualization may be supported by appeals to the biblical witness: (1) a "merely experiential" form, whereby humans are reminded of God's power, previous involvement, and promises, and these are made relevant to a contemporary situation; (2) a "faith-engaging" form, whereby God is reminded of his previous covenant promises, and implored to implement here and now his commitment to save; (3) a "faith-producing" form, namely the neo-orthodox concept of the Divine enkindling of faith, "which thereby manifests in its very being the saving power the text

proclaims"; (4) a "reality-producing" form, which further engages and specifies the content of salvation, "recognizing that we are speaking here of realities other than that of any ontological reality faith itself might be seen to constitute."[29]

The main point of interest here is that Chenderlin found it necessary to affirm a view of "memorial" *both* as actualization *and* as a "pointer" to God. Thus, these two positions may not represent competing options but may rather be complementary perspectives on the single, multi-faceted reality of the biblical concept of "memorial."

Future Directions in a Mennonite Theology of the Lord's Supper
What conclusions may be drawn about the significance of post-biblical traditions for understanding the Lord's Supper?

To begin, the controversial notion of the Supper being a "sacrifice" will deserve another look by Anabaptist theologians, when seen in light of Hoffman's view of the Supper functioning as a "pointer" to Jesus Christ. According to his notion of liturgical pointers, it would be entirely appropriate to speak of the elements of the bread and wine "re-presenting" the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to God, with a view to reminding God of his own essentially merciful nature, and beseeching that the mercy publicized in Jesus' sacrificial death be made effective in the here and now. This would in no sense constitute a repeated sacrifice — Christ's death was once and for all. But it would constitute a memorial to that sacrifice, which is seen to have an important role in the personal approach of the believer to God, at the very least by providing a request to which God desires and is able to respond.

In addition, the notion of the "real presence" of Christ in the Supper will require further reflection. Scholarly opinion is admittedly not unanimous in supporting Thurian's equation of the biblical concept of memorial with "actualization" or "re-presentation." Even for scholars who grant the validity of actualization in explicating the biblical concept, questions may remain about what it was the memorial actualized — a past event, an encounter with God, the promise of salvation, or something else.

Nevertheless, the possibility that the Lord's Supper "re-presents the presence of the risen Christ in the church" cannot be definitively excluded. If the symbolism of the Supper is seen to represent both Jesus Christ and the prayerful yearning of the congregation for union with its Lord (along lines

alluded to in the "bread of heaven" discourse in John 6); and if, as Chenderlin states, a central feature of "memorial" in both the OT and the NT is a personal approach to God[30]; and if the memorial of the Supper is a memorial to the living Lord and not a dead hero, it becomes very unclear why one would *not* speak of encountering Christ in the Supper. At the very least, the phrase "Do this in memorial of me" may not be understood to preclude the possibility of such a presence. Furthermore, once one affirms an encounter with Christ in the Supper, the questions of the nature of this presence and the relationship of this presence to the elements of the Supper are unavoidably raised. Does the resurrected Christ retain his humanity, and if so, can it ever be spoken of as separated from his divinity? If not, one must then affirm that any encounters with Christ in the Supper are an experience of the whole Christ, human and divine. Is it then possible to speak of Christ's glorified but still human flesh and blood being present in the Supper?

Future Directions in the Role of Tradition in Mennonite Scholarship
I affirm *both* the value of disciplined theological reflection *and* the necessity of this reflection to move, both linguistically and cognitively, beyond the content of the biblical texts themselves while remaining rooted in and accountable to them. This is what I believe the majority of authors within the history of the Christian "tradition" have sought to do, and it behooves us as Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars to become much more familiar with the avenues of questioning they have pursued. However, this affirmation raises the issue of distinguishing between faithful and unfaithful forms of tradition.

In discussing the reversal of opinion within the Christian church on the issue of violence around the time of Constantine, Yoder had this to say about identifying faithful tradition:

> A change has taken place which must be described as a reversal rather than an organic development. This case shows that when the issue is whether change has been faithful or unfaithful, *then* the reason the reformers challenge some usage or idea is not that it is not in the Scriptures, but that it is counter to the Scriptures; not that it is an ancient idea insufficiently validated by ancient texts, but that it is a later introduction invalidated by its contradicting the ancient message.[31]

In the instance examined in this paper, it appears as though that strand of Mennonite eucharistic theology which has understood "memorial" solely in terms of its horizontal aspect represents just such a later introduction, one that is invalidated by its contradicting an ancient biblical message. In this case, it seems that the "tradition" has preserved important biblical insights about the role of Jesus' self-instituted memorial for the community of faith.

But if the tradition of the church can sometimes function to preserve, rather than obfuscate, important biblical perspectives, how are we as Anabaptists to understand the role of tradition in our theological reflection? Karlstadt's view represents a denial of the Bible's own witness to ongoing revelation, and as such is inadequate. The WCC proposal is good as far as it goes, but fails to define criteria for distinguishing between faithful and unfaithful tradition. What of the Tridentine two source theory of revelation? Does the retention, in this particular case, of a version of the biblical understanding of memorial in the church's liturgy lend credence to the notion of a repository of orally-transmitted truths within the "apostolic" churches?

To this I would say no. However, I wonder whether there is not a need to take the reality of ecclesial cultures and traditions much more seriously, and the undocumented "information" such cultures and traditions may carry.

In the present case, it is widely acknowledged that the *lex credendi* of eucharistic theology was determined by the *lex orandi* of the liturgy, itself shaped by patterns of thought and worship inherited from Jewish and Hellenistic sources. Of course, the biblical materials themselves are the product of tradition, but perhaps in this instance the liturgy of the church retained a sense of the significance of the Lord's Supper which only now has become available to the tools of contemporary biblical scholarship.

Conclusions

I would largely affirm Yoder's grapevine "root and branch" model as an appropriately Anabaptist approach to tradition. It preserves the Anabaptist concern to be "a biblical people" without rejecting the possibility either of ongoing revelation or that ecclesial cultures may preserve important biblical perspectives by means of their accumulated traditions.

Consequently, what is required in the future of Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship is a self-conscious commitment to seek to integrate the resources

of our own, and other, Christian traditions in our contemporary theological reflection. To some extent, this may require a shift from fundamental suspicion of non-Anabaptist ecclesial traditions to openness — perhaps even an openness limned with optimism. Such an openness requires a commitment to becoming thoroughly familiar with the resources which have been handed down to us, both within and outside of our particular movement. If space permitted, it would be fascinating to explore here the potential for fruitful interaction between the writings of sixteenth-century Anabaptists whose works point to something beyond a strictly "memorialist" understanding of the Supper, and those within the Roman Catholic Church who wrote of a "real presence" from within the symbolist stream of eucharistic theology. In these and other areas, only if we are familiar with the accumulated theology and liturgy of our own and other Christian communions shall we be able to gauge which branches of tradition need to be pruned, and which ones may be left as faithful, organic developments from the root of Scripture.

Notes

[1] Günther Gassmann, ed., *Documentary History of Faith and Order: 1963-1993* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 11.

[2] *Ibid.*, 13-14.

[3] *Ibid.*, 16.

[4] *Ibid.*, 11.

[5] John H. Yoder, "The Authority of Tradition," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 67.

[6] *Ibid.*, 69.

[7] John Rempel, in *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1993), has provided a relatively detailed review of contemporary Mennonite articulations of the significance of the Lord's Supper; see esp. 205-209.

[8] Harold S. Bender, and C. Henry Smith, ed., *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. I (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), 651.

[9] General Conference Mennonite Church, and Mennonite Church, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Waterloo, ON/Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 50.

[10] Paul Bradshaw, "Anamnesis in Modern Eucharistic Debate," in Michael A. Signer, ed., *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 73.

[11] Theodor Gaster, *Passover: Its History and Traditions* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1962), 63. For the original see Mishnah, Pesah 10.5.

[12] Max Thurian, "The eucharistic memorial, sacrifice of praise and supplication," in Max Thurian, ed., *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), 91.

[13] Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 74.

[14] Childs, 74-5.

[15] Robert L. Brawley, "Anamnesis and Absence in the Lord's Supper," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 20 (Winter 1990): 140-41.

[16] Markus Barth, *Rediscovering the Lord's Supper* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988).

[17] Ray C. Jones, "The Lord's Supper and the Concept of Anamnesis," *Word and World* 6.4 (1986): 441; R. T. Beckwith, "The Jewish Background to Christian Worship," in Cheslyn Jones et al., ed., *The Study of Liturgy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), 77; Fritz Chenderlin, *"Do This As My Memorial"* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 185; Richard J. Ginn, *The Present and the Past* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1989), 24.

[18] Chenderlin, 121; Ray C. Jones, 435; and Robert A. D. Clancy, "The Old Testament Roots of Remembrance in the Lord's Supper," *Concordia Journal* 19 (January 1993): 37.

[19] Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Does God Remember? A Liturgical Theology of Memory," in Michael A. Signer, ed., *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 42.

[20] *Ibid.*, 53.

[21] *Ibid.*, 66.

[22] Chenderlin, *"Do This As My Memorial,"* 116.

[23] *Ibid.*, 71.   [24] *Ibid.*, 198.   [25] *Ibid.*, 240.   [26] *Ibid.*, 248.   [27] *Ibid.*, 261.   [28] *Ibid.*, 248.

[29] *Ibid.*, 252. (For both of the immediately preceding quotations.)

[30] *Ibid.*, 92.

[31] Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 76.

(Re)Figuring Tradition

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Introduction

Developing a theology and hermeneutics of tradition comprises one crucial aspect of the ongoing emergence of explicit, more comprehensive theological articulation reflecting the implicit, lived theology of Anabaptist-Mennonite communities.[1] The notion of tradition will continue to present a particular challenge in the postmodern context and in light of socio-cultural and historiographic shifts among Mennonites.

The full chapter of my dissertation, from which this presentation is excerpted, surveys the definition and function of tradition[2] in recent Anabaptist-Mennonite theology by treating the work of four figures representing a range of theological approaches in the US context: J. Denny Weaver, Thomas Finger, Gordon Kaufman, and Duane Friesen.[3] Here I will sketch their approaches and present a commentary on their contribution to a hermeneutics of tradition in Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. I conclude by suggesting the fruitfulness of an explicitly hermeneutical approach to the notion of tradition and its function in theologizing by engaging the interpretation theory of Paul Ricoeur.

Tradition in Contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology

Summary of Figures
Denny Weaver represents a narrative theology approach in which the theological task focuses on Christian self-description and the inner logic of the tradition. A tradition may be identified by its regulative principles, a set of interdependent beliefs structuring a way of life.[4] He delineates three regulative principles of Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition: the normativity of Jesus; peace (including nonviolent love); and community as alternative society.[5] All of these are grounded in the normative biblical narrative of Jesus. Plurality in the tradition, both past and present, is understood as various expressions of these same regulative principles.

Thomas Finger views the primary theological task as one of synthesis: harmonizing clashing assumptions, smoothing out paradoxes, refining assertions; his is a synthesizing or integrating approach.[6] Finger summarizes Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition as a matter of discipleship, which he describes as living in accordance with Jesus' teaching and example (including nonviolent love) in close fellowship with other Christians.[7] Yet this tradition is open to revision, allowing for the incorporation of new themes.[8] His own work reflects a real freedom in combining an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective with aspects drawn from other Christian traditions.

Gordon Kaufman's imaginative constructive approach construes the theological task as ascertaining which inherited beliefs and concepts are still viable and reconstructing them so they may continue to serve human intellectual and religious needs.[9] This critical reconstruction is governed by the pragmatic

criterion of humanization, and the ability of the tradition to orient life in the current context in light of contemporary knowledge.[10] For Kaufman, Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition continues to be characterized by four things: an emphasis on the paradigmatic example of Jesus including his ethic of nonresistant and self-sacrificial love; a community committed to reconciliation; a witness of the whole of life; and the primacy of life over belief.[11]

Duane Friesen's theology-of-culture approach argues that Christian traditions, including Anabaptist-Mennonitism, are best understood as presenting various "cultural visions" which orient the lives of their participants.[12] Constructive interpretation of the vision and the Christ at its center must empower participants to make sense of existence and must orient life fruitfully in the present.[13] Friesen argues the "dual citizenship" characterizing his theology of culture reflects three definitive aspects of Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition: an alternative cultural vision; this vision's embodiment in a community for the world; and this community's being oriented by Jesus and his radical discipleship, the heart of which is nonviolent love.[14]

Commentary on Figures
First, all four thinkers construe the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition as primarily emphasizing a way of life or an orientation to life with significant ethical implications. And all describe the basic outlines of this orientation and ethic in similar terms: a voluntary alternative community, following the radical discipleship exemplified by Jesus, including nonviolent love of neighbor and enemy. Consequently, a hermeneutics of tradition for this community must do justice to this emphasis on lived faith and its radical ethic.

Second, Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition is normed by something that stretches beyond itself. All but Kaufman explicitly link the life-orientation and ethical emphasis to the Believers' Church, as a way of tracing the relation of Anabaptism to the broader history of the church. All four consider Jesus and the community following him as paradigmatic of this orientation. Hence, for all, any Christian tradition, including Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, is normed by something else. But here differences emerge. Weaver and Finger argue without apparent qualification that the Christ event witnessed to in scripture functions normatively, and they begin considering the hermeneutical issues involved in taking a text as a norm. Kaufman and Friesen present a pragmatic criterion to

which all else is subject. Scripture retains a role for both (more prominently for Friesen), because the constructive interpretation of the Christ event which it contains can fulfill the requirement of providing a reasonable and fruitful life orientation. Thus, it seems that an Anabaptist-Mennonite hermeneutics of tradition must address the question of norms, including the complex relation of tradition to scripture and the tradition's ability to orient life fruitfully in the present.

Third, tradition as both chosen and given. In keeping with the voluntarism of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, all in some measure emphasize the importance of choice in following the life orientation of any tradition. Yet all four figures also recognize tradition as a given source to some degree; we are inextricably located within historical traditions, we bring tradition-shaped perspectives to our interpretation of human existence. All reflect an awareness of historicity, something essential for adequate discussion of the way traditions function.

Fourth, for all, the understanding of the tradition and the articulation of its identity is impacted by the socio-cultural shifts which have occurred among many Anabaptist-Mennonites in the past century. Here I mean specifically the move from rural enclaves of relatively homogenous communities to urbanized life, and increasing integration into the broader, diverse society. Kaufman and Friesen both discuss the reality of living as part of multiple communities. Both ground a positive view of cultural engagement in an understanding of the radical ethics of Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition; so engagement is not a shift away from but a continuation of the tradition and its basic tenets. In doing so, Friesen retains the language of alternative community, while Kaufman's work avoids any oppositional impressions, employing the notion of evolutionary historical trajectories. Finger's synthetic approach surely results from his engagement with multiple communities, reflecting his involvement in the ecumenical movement. He rightfully calls attention to the fact that traditions develop in dialogue with other traditions. His awareness of multiple communities and willingness to borrow from them is not in doubt. Less clear is whether this includes the recognition of actual belonging to, versus simply dialoguing with and borrowing from, multiple communities (religious or otherwise). Weaver, in response to identity confusion resulting from socio-cultural shifts and uncritical acceptance of theologies from other traditions, calls for the development of an explicit Anabaptist-Mennonite theology to replace the lost socio-cultural boundary markers. Explicit theological articulation consistent with the community's implicit theology is indeed a

necessity, but it can never fully take the place of those identity markers. Here Friesen's focal practices provide a much needed corrective.

In fact, of all the thinkers, Friesen arguably presents the most complete description of tradition as it functions in the lives of its participants, through his engagement with cultural anthropology. His discussion of focal practices communicates a lived faith and attends more explicitly to how the process of "traditioning" itself takes place. Surely this issue is at the heart of those raised by socio-cultural shifts: How the traditioning process occurs among participants of multiple communities and in diverse contexts. How might an explicit hermeneutics of tradition help provide a construct for understanding and attending to "traditioning" in these settings?

Fifth, for all four thinkers, the understanding of the tradition and articulation of its identity is impacted by the historiographic shift from monogenesis to polygenesis, the resultant demise of Harold Bender's functionally normative Anabaptist Vision, and the consequent heightened recognition of historical and contemporary plurality. All four embrace this reality, though notable by its absence is any real discussion of the attendant ambiguity. Kaufman is least concerned to engage Bender's vision or these changes explicitly, but his understanding of historicity and his notion of evolutionary historical trajectories presents the most radical application of what is at issue in these shifts. Friesen engages Bender critically, distancing his culturally engaged understanding of the tradition from the essentialism and separatism he associates with Bender's model. Friesen's theology of culture includes aspects of a hermeneutics of tradition which addresses this multiplicity through discussion of overlapping communities reflecting various cultural visions. Both Finger and Weaver retain Bender's vision of an Anabaptist essence as an appropriate description of the tradition. Finger does so without apparent qualification, while Weaver reframes Bender's elements as regulative principles but continues to use "core" and "essence" language. Thus, the question of making theological sense of the historical and contemporary plurality within the tradition persists. How can one develop an understanding of tradition which both reflects its plurality and fluidity and communicates its recognizable identity?

The work of these four figures together points towards aspects of an Anabaptist-Mennonite hermeneutics of tradition. Such a hermeneutics must reflect the tradition's emphasis on a lived faith and radical ethic, and an awareness of human historicity and volition (tradition as both "given" and chosen). It

must reflect the plurality and fluidity of the tradition while communicating its recognizable identity. It must address the question of norms, including the complex relation of tradition to scripture and tradition's ability to orient life fruitfully in the present. It entails a robust understanding of tradition as including both explicit theological articulation and visible, communal, focal practices. It must account for how the traditioning process occurs among its members, who are themselves participants in multiple communities and diverse contexts.

Paul Ricoeur's Interpretation Theory and a Hermeneutics of Tradition
Paul Ricoeur's work may assist us in developing a more explicit, fully-orbed hermeneutics of tradition in Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. Three concepts are central: the productivity of "distanciation," the understanding-explanation dialectic, and the world of the text. Ricoeur develops a dialectic of understanding and explanation as central to his text-focused interpretive theory. He links the necessary "detour" through explanation to an assertion of the productivity of distanciation in understanding. The interpreter encounters the "world" or way of being-in-the-world projected by the text. Distance from the original author, context, and audience makes possible a new event of meaning in the interpreter's encounter with the world projected by the text. This distance also allows for a critical examination of the interpreter's assumptions and of the text's structure, content, and production. These three focal concepts have significant implications for a hermeneutics of tradition, for Ricoeur views text interpretation as the paradigm for the human encounter of historical traditions.[15]

The productivity of distanciation. At the heart of the productivity of distanciation lies the dialectic of participatory belonging to, and alienating distance from, tradition. Given this dialectic, we never begin the interpretive process from completely outside the circle. We both belong to tradition and must understand and appropriate it through interpretation of its "texts" (broadly construed) that lie at a distance from us. Understanding and appropriating the heritage entails a detour through the interpretation of its "signs." In this way, the interpretive task consists in making distanciation productive. In fact, Ricoeur argues, without this distanciation "we would never become conscious of belonging to a world, [or] a culture, [or] a tradition."[16] The hermeneutical reflection corresponding to distanciation "is the critical moment, originally bound to the consciousness of belonging-to, that confers its properly historical

character on this consciousness."[17] This properly character consists in a dialectic of the efficacy of the past we undergo and the reception of the past we bring about. Ricoeur employs the term "traditionality" to describe this dialectic of transmission, consisting of both sedimentation and innovation. Traditionality "signifies the temporal distance separating us from the past is not a dead interval but a transmission that is generative of meaning. Before being an inert deposit, tradition is an operation that can only make sense dialectically through the exchange between the interpreted past and the interpreting present."[18]

The understanding-explanation dialectic. Interpretation entails a dialectic of understanding and explanation, which includes both a hermeneutics of retrieval and a (self-) critical hermeneutics of suspicion. Just as deconstruction of the illusions of the subject emerge as central to self-understanding in front of the text, so understanding and appropriation of a tradition and its heritage must include a detour through critique and critical explanation. For, as David Tracy observes, there are no innocent traditions.[19] Ricoeur's critique of the self-positing, autonomous ego may be extended to authoritarian understandings of tradition. A tradition must be tested, for it presents an order of meaning entailing truth claims. The recourse to explanatory procedures is necessary, for meaning is inseparable from truth, and such presumptions of truth must, for Ricoeur, appeal to the tribunal of reason. A hermeneutics of tradition must include the critical moment.[20]

The world of the text. The text's projection of a world and possibilities for being-in-the-world may be seen as analogous to the way of being circumscribed by a tradition. Indeed, for Ricoeur texts are principal objectifications of historical traditions and thus the paradigm for understanding the past. Tradition requires the continual interpretation of its "deposit": "our 'heritage' is not a sealed package we pass from hand to hand, without ever opening, but rather a treasure from which we draw by the handful and which by this very act is replenished. Every tradition lives by the grace of interpretation, and it is at this price that it continues, that is, remains."[21] Here the dialectic of the efficacy of the past we undergo and the reception of the past we bring about re-emerges. As interpreters of a tradition we are both heirs and innovators, "receiving" its contents as transmitted by a previous chain of interpreters, and fully making meaning of it only as we concretize a present understanding that culminates in appropriation.[22] The "configuration" of the "text" of tradition becomes "refiguration" in effective action, instructed

by the "works" handed down. The text of tradition functions as a medium through which self-understanding emerges, and through which a possible world and ways of being-in-the-world are disclosed. As with literary texts, in the appropriation of tradition, interpretation becomes event.

Conclusion

I would suggest that Ricoeur's first two notions — the productivity of distanciation with its dialectic of participatory belonging to and alienating distance from tradition, and the understanding-explanation dialectic including a hermeneutics of retrieval and suspicion — help address the problematic of tradition in the postmodern setting. This problematic is reflected in several aspects of the trajectories for a hermeneutics of tradition I sketched drawing on the four figures: an awareness of human historicity; traditions as both given and chosen; the plurality and fluidity yet recognizable identity of traditions; the difficult and complex questions surrounding norms and, by implication, authority. Ricoeur can help us better account for the dialectical exchange of interpreted past and interpreting present as it shapes Anabaptist-Mennonite theologizing. This dialectic must be understood to span the past nearly 500 years rather than leapfrogging back and forth between the twentieth or twenty-first centuries and the sixteenth. The paired hermeneutics of retrieval and suspicion assist in accounting for the ambiguity of our tradition as well. With this pairing there is room both to affirm the truth about God, humanity, and the gospel disclosed through this tradition, and to critique the ways it has obscured such truth through the machinations of power, coercion, and domination, and through sins of commission and omission.

The third notion — of a text projecting a world or way of being-in-the-world which interpreters help complete and appropriate — seems particularly suited to an understanding of tradition in Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. For it appears to provide a model allowing for the emphasis on lived faith and a radical ethic central to the self-understanding of those in the tradition. The "text" of tradition discloses a possible world and ways of being-in-the-world, but it can only do so in the act of interpretation, which culminates in appropriation at the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the interpreter.

The fruitfulness of this hermeneutical model for thinking about the traditioning process, the plurality, fluidity, and recognizable identity of tradition, and its role in theologizing deserves further exploration. An adequate

hermeneutics of tradition must reflect the historical and contemporary pluralism of Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, the primacy of faith as a way of life in this tradition, and the dynamic, negotiated nature of the definition and function of historical traditions generally. Such a hermeneutics constitutes an important aspect of the methodological issues that will continue to face Anabaptist-Mennonite theology.

Notes

[1] The Council of Mennonite Seminaries convened its first consultation on Anabaptist-Mennonite theology in 1969 for the purpose of stimulating theological conversation in relationship to the larger theological task; see A. J. Klassen, ed., *Consultation on Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology* (Fresno, CA: Council of Mennonite Seminaries, 1970). A consultation on hermeneutics and systematic theology convened by The Institute of Mennonite Studies in Elkhart, in 1983 addressed whether systematic theologies in Mennonite perspectives are possible or desirable, and what shape they might take; see Willard Swartley, ed., *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, Occasional Papers, no. 7 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984). Since 1983, *The Conrad Grebel Review* has provided a primary forum for this ongoing discussion. See also Ben C. Ollenburger, ed., *So Wide a Sea: Essays On Biblical and Systematic Theology*, Text-Reader Series, vol. 4 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1991); Calvin Wall Redekop, ed., *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Institute for Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies, 1988), Part 1.

[2] Sandra Schneider offers three meanings of tradition in *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 72: "Tradition, as the *foundational gift* out of which the Church's experience unfolds throughout history, is the Holy Spirit who is the presence of the risen Jesus making the Church the Body of Christ. Tradition, as *content*, is the sum total of appropriated and transmitted Christian experience, out of which Christians throughout history select the material for renewed synthesis of the faith. Tradition refers also to the *mode* by which that content is made available to successive generations of believers, the way in which the traditioning of the faith is carried on throughout history." This study is concerned with the second and third meanings.

[3] Some voices important to the ongoing discussion are not represented. An embodied feminist voice is one such absence. This is not because women have nothing to say about Mennonite theologizing and Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, as attested to by the Anabaptist Women Doing Theology Conferences (1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2001, scheduled 2003), the published conference papers (see *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10, 14, 19 and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 65 and other work by women such as Nadine Pence Frantz, Gayle Gerber Koontz, Lydia Harder, Ruth Krall, Melanie May. Unfortunately, none has produced substantial works usable within the requirements of this study — American, Mennonite, and more traditionally theological. The same may be said, to the best of my knowledge, of racial and ethnic minority

voices. My requirement of American Mennonite scholars addressing the American Mennonite scene has eliminated Brethren and other Anabaptist-related voices (notably that of Scott Holland), and Canadian voices although significant dialogue occurs binationally and in the forum of the Canadian Mennonite journal, *The Conrad Grebel Review*. Here the most glaring absence is surely the noteworthy and considerable work of A. James Reimer.

[4] J. Denny Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist: The Origin and Significance of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 121.

[5] J. Denny Weaver, "Mennonite Theological Self-Understanding: A Response to A. James Reimer," in *Mennonite Identity*, ed. Redekop, 58. Weaver presents summaries of this theological outlook in several other works; see *Becoming Anabaptist*, 129-41; "Becoming Anabaptist-Mennonite: The Contemporary Relevance of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 4 (1986): 162-82; "Mennonites: Theology, Peace, and Identity," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 6 (Spring 1988): 126-31.

[6] Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985-1989), I:9, 31.

[7] Thomas N. Finger, "The Way to Nicea: Reflections from a Mennonite Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 3 (Fall 1985): 231; "Is 'Systematic Theology' Possible from a Mennonite Perspective?" in *Explorations*, ed. Swartley, 42.

[8] Thomas N. Finger, "Appropriating Other Traditions While Remaining Anabaptist," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 17 (Spring 1999): 61-65.

[9] Gordon D. Kaufman, *God—Mystery—Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 22.

[10] Gordon D. Kaufman, "Doing Theology from a Liberal Point of View," in *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComisky (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 398-99.

[11] See Gordon D. Kaufman, "The Mennonite Roots of My Theological Perspective," in *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (Newton, KS: Mennonite Press, 1996), 9, 17; "My Life and My Theological Reflection: Two Themes," *dialog* 40 (Spring 2001): 50, 58; "Mennonite Peace Theology in a Religiously Plural World," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 14 (Winter 1996): 33-34, 47.

[12] Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City: An Anabaptist Theology of Culture* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000), 15-16, 24-25.

[13] Duane K. Friesen, "A Critical Analysis of Narrative Ethics," in *The Church as Theological Community: Essays in Honor of David Schroeder*, ed. Harry Huebner (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite Bible College Publications, 1990), 235.

[14] Duane K. Friesen, "An Anabaptist Theology of Culture for a New Century," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 13 (Winter 1995): 36-37, 49; *Artists, Citizens*, 24, 64.

[15] See Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 1976) and *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Part II — "Studies in the Theory of Interpretation."

[16] Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 107.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), III:221.

[19] David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987), 37.

[20] See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, III:222-27; "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" and "Appropriation" in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 63-100 and 182-93.

[21] Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 27.

[22] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, III:221-22.

How to Eat Your Bible:
Performance and Understanding for Mennonites

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> "You, son of man, listen to the words I say; do not be a rebel like that rebellious set. Open your mouth and eat what I am about to give to you." I looked. A hand was there, stretching out to me and holding a scroll. He unrolled it in front of me; it was written on back and front; on it was written "lamentations, wailings, moanings." He said, "Son of man, eat what is given to you. eat this scroll, then go and speak to the House of Israel." *Ezekiel 2.8-3.1*

It is not common practice, in our highly textual society, to begin a presentation with an exhortation to eat paper. Granted, Ezekiel's paper would have been very different from ours today. Our acid-free paper is meant to last. Our perfect binding accepts no fault. Our typography readably fixes words in linear order for the ages. Ezekiel's scroll held three words and it was meant to be consumed.

It is, however, more common to begin essays with reflections on what we are doing when we try to understand these papered words. The ethics of this practice has been given some attention, particularly as it relates to biblical interpretation, with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's presidental address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1987, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation."[1]

In that essay Schüssler Fiorenza suggests all objective, value-free, biblical interpretation is in fact male interpretation. It is interpretation by a certain group for that same group. Scholars who want biblical interpretation to be ethical must be good biblical scholars, but they must also

> engage biblical scholarship in a hermeneutic-evaluative discursive practice exploring the power/knowledge relation inscribed in contemporary biblical discourse and in the biblical texts themselves.[2]

I am in total agreement with Schüssler Fiorenza that in order to ethically interpret the biblical text we need to be, in Daniel Patte's words, both critical and accountable.[3] But in seeking to understand the Bible with the same voracity as Ezekiel did, do we not need to do more than simply interpret it ethically?

My thesis is that we need to perform the biblical text in order to understand it. In what follows I want to merge biblical understanding and ethical practices, and I want to argue that performance is the best way to think about the space where they meet. My argument will be necessarily circular, but I hope to show that it is dialogical as well. I will do this by looking at Schüssler Fiorenza's approach to the Bible in *Rhetoric and Ethics* and John Howard Yoder's approach to the Christian body in *Body Politics*. In conclusion I will show that this approach to performance is not unlike the approach to the Bible that the Anabaptists had.

Schüssler Fiorenza creates a detailed analytic compass through which she becomes more confident about being able to interpret the biblical text without creating damaging readings. To this end she is deeply invested in uncovering the rhetoric of interpretation in both the present and the past. Her work is complex and plural, but let me suggest its breadth by summarizing the compass that orients this process.

This compass begins with the "Subject of Interpretation." Since the compass is always pointed at the interpreter and at the text, our orientation here consists in asking questions about gender, race, class, social location, and operative community and theological frameworks. From the subject we move to the subject's "(Unreflected) Presupposition" — worldviews, unconscious assumptions, power relations, convictions, and dreams — unarticulated biases no-one can escape. From here we move more formally to "Intellectual Frameworks and Models" — those understandings of scholarship, scientific investigation, interpretation history or theology which

frame our academic work — and to "Methods and Methodology," the control and critical selection of and among various intellectual frameworks. Schüssler Fiorenza does not want to be limited to only the religious disciplines; the ethical interpreter also needs to address diverse disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, social theory, communications. At this point the interpreter can propose an "Area of Research" and begin to understand their "Basic Questions and Interpretive Metaphors." All of this work is directed toward those questions inside a hermeneutics of transformation – questions of "Values, Goals, and Visions" which determine at last both the meaning and ethical valences of a text and an interpreter. It is important to highlight that the apex of the interpretive process is transformation and social change.

I believe Schüssler Fiorenza's very thorough work offers the best approach to biblical scholarship yet conceived. Most valuably, she deliberately decenters the objective mooring of biblical scholarship. Biblical scholarship becomes more performative when language and rhetoric are the determining questions rather than the supposedly objective questions of science.

However, I am dubious about the possibility of generating biblical understanding with Schüssler Fiorenza's compass, which admittedly provides a comprehensive orientation and detailed and interwoven checks and balances to guarantee ethical interpretation of the text. But this very breadth of vision makes any reading of scripture difficult.[4] It becomes the almost exclusive domain of scholars — and scholars with lots of time to get their moorings. Secondly, in the diversity of points on the compass lies an openness or, more starkly, a demand to use non-biblical resources to guarantee the ethicalness of our interpretation. Although scripture is never free from the culture in which it was first composed, and although we can never free ourselves from our own presuppositions and prejudices, I still remain doubtful about the attempt to use outside criteria to ensure ethical interpretation. Take the idea of social change as an example. Certainly Jesus attempted to effect certain social changes. Certainly some of the most memorable performances of scripture in history are also part and parcel of social change. But should social change be the apex of the interpretive process? From our standpoint it certainly seems as if it should — lots of things need changing. But social change — in and of itself — does not necessarily bring about the Kingdom of God. How can we be sure that these criteria will be any more ethical than those we discover when we take the text into our bodies?

We take the text into our bodies when we attempt to understand it by performing it in our lives or by seeing it performed in other people's lives. In making this argument I am setting a distance between biblical *interpretation* and biblical *understanding*, as well as between ethical *theory* and ethical *practices*.

Biblical understanding is contingent upon ethical practices and vice versa. You have to eat your Bible to understand it; you have to take it into your body and see what you become.

What does this look like? I think that John Howard Yoder has glimpsed the pattern of this life in his *Body Politics*.[5] Here Yoder introduces five practices of the Christian Body before the watching world. Although not comprehensive, these practices are idiomatic of what the church — the Kingdom of God — can offer to discussion in the public square. The five practices are:

1.   mutual accountability, or forgiveness, or binding and loosing
2.   baptism into a voluntary community
3.   the sharing of a common meal, or the Eucharist
4.   the valuing of diversity, or the Multiplicity of Gifts
5.   Open Meeting, or the discerning of the spirit in the giving of truth in a conversation

The practices which constitute the Christian Body make visible to the world the truth of the Kingdom of God. Each is thoroughly biblical, but each only takes up its meaning inside the life of a Christian community. We only *understand* the Bible when we perform it in our lives or see it performed in other people's lives. Someone who has interpreted the Bible but not performed it is like an actor dressed in costume, holding appropriate props and standing on an elegantly decorated set but unattached to — or worse, unaware of — the play going on all around them. Mennonites are particularly prone to looking like this actor.

However, nothing in Yoder's five practices forces us out into the public square. Yoder admits as much in *For the Nations*. He acknowledges that his work has been viewed as sectarian and states that some of his friends have encouraged this misreading. Stanley Hauerwas is perhaps the most notorious example — consider the title of his book *Against the Nations*. In *For the Nations* we are reminded that everything about the five practices is public. Yoder lifts up these practices and shows their relevance as public truth.[6] This

is how the Christian Body looks to a watching and waiting world. But what if the world isn't watching?

I am committed to Yoder's vision in *Body Politics*. But I prefer to recast these practices as "performances," or alternatively to use these practices to imagine new Christian performances that would engage the watching world. Yoder's primary goal is always to give an argument that the church must be the church. Of course the church cannot be the church for the church; the church must be the church for the world. We must be aware of our audience even when they aren't watching us. We know that our body is a controversial one. We should expect it to get attention if it's moving — even if that attention is negative.

Conclusion

Let us turn to sixteenth-century Anabaptism, which was rife with examples of performance. From the scripturally dependent confessions of faith used to test consensus rather than fix doctrine[7] to the oral/aural nature of Anabaptist communication,[8] or from their anticlericalism and egalitarianism[9] to their strong spirit-centered hermeneutical communities, Anabaptists emphasized the internalizing and living out of scripture as central to the Christian life.

A few stories suffice to demonstrate early Anabaptism's performative character. Arnold Snyder tells this story taken from the life of Fridolin Sicher:

> [Sicher] reported that he could not even go out for a walk on Sundays without bumping into huddled crowds of people doing their 'readings.' Furthermore, gross commoners with no culture or learning began to read. 'I myself have heard,' he wrote, 'an illiterate person preach or 'read,' which is something I cannot understand.' Sicher concluded that either these readers were full of grace like St. Peter and the apostles, or the devil was behind their activity. Sicher clearly leaned toward the latter explanation.[10]

The reading alluded to in this passage would not need to be reading as we know it. Often Anabaptists would hear the "letter" of scripture read aloud, remember central passages, and by living in accordance with these principles would claim to be true interpreters of the Word. In Anabaptist circles this sort of spirit-led interpretation was given more authority than the written word so that literacy gave no privilege in interpretation. The situation was "impossibly egalitarian: those who had the Spirit . . . could claim access to the 'Word' *even without*

being able to read the letter."[11] Snyder contends that "not only can we assume that dialogue was possible but we must consider it virtually impossible to avoid."[12]

A further example of the lengths Anabaptists went to in order to imbibe scripture is found in this quotation about an early Anabaptist:

> [Anabaptists] tried to memorize large sections of the Scriptures, not in order to become literalists in a negative sense but in order to really know what the call to faithfulness meant for them. One of them confessed: 'I hope to be able to learn one hundred chapters of the Testament by heart.'[13]

If Anabaptism was as strongly oral as Snyder asserts, then implications arise for our topic. The performative approach to Christianity created a world in which truth was easily accessible (accessible from a written text like the Bible even without the ability to read), the intellectual property of the peasants as much as of the learned, and subject to continual discussion. Balthasar Hubmaier collects these performative emphases in this wonderful quotation:

> Whichever Christian on earth can teach me better should show me such with Scripture for God's sake. I will wholeheartedly follow him with great thanksgiving as he follows Christ. Truth is [unkillable].[14]

I dwell here on how Anabaptists took scripture into their bodies, on a rhetorical interpretation that also had a strong moral compass but was not guaranteed by any outside criteria. I could have as easily told martyr stories or stories illustrative of Yoder's five practices. I also could have told the stories of Hilary of Poitiers, Catherine of Sienna, or Teresa of Avila. For that matter I could have told the story of Oscar Romero, the uncle I never knew — martyred in Africa before I was born, or Marcie Boniferro who walks the night streets of Toronto extending God's love to the women and men trapped there. Each of these stories embodies a vulnerability and narrates the taking of significant risks. I've focused on more textual stories because they show how Anabaptist internalizations of the biblical story occupied space in the sixteenth century. Then we were noticed because, I think, we were trying to perform. Performance is a good metaphor for the Christian life because any performance is for an audience. At some point, no matter how hard we have practiced, how good we think we have become, or how good others tell us we are, we need to step out onto the stage and attempt a performance. We need to be vulnerable. We need to take risks. Performance moves beyond both

Schüssler Fiorenza's rhetorical-ethical interpretation and Yoder's practices, because it incorporates attention to the text and practices, but holds them together and then moves out from behind the curtain onto the stage.

Who will become our audience today, and how will we perform for them?

Notes

[1] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107.1 (1988): 3-17.

[2] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 30.

[3] Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

[4] Schüssler Fiorenza does admit the importance of common sense interpretations. See especially *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 53. However, I take the overall force of her argument to exclude the possibility of these readings, if not theorectically then practically.

[5] John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2001).

[6] John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). See especially the Introduction.

[7] C. J. Dyck, "Foreword," in H.J. Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope and One God* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985), 16.

[8] C. Arnold Snyder, "Orality, Literacy and Anabaptists," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 65 (1991): 374.

[9] C. Arnold Snyder, *An Introduction to Mennonite History and Theology* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1992), 83.

[10] Snyder, "Orality," 374.

[11] Snyder, *Introduction*, 83 (emphasis his).

[12] Snyder, "Orality," 374.

[13] C. J. Dyck, "Hermeneutics and Discipleship," in Willard Swartley, ed. *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 32-33.

[14] H. Wayne Pipkin and John Howard Yoder, ed., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1989) 76. The editors of the English translation had difficulty moving the German "*Die Wahrheit ist untödlich*." into an agreeable English. H. Wayne Pipkin, who translated this document, chose "immortal," while Yoder prefers "unkillable." The slogan in its context in this document is revealing about Hubmaier's approach to the truth. While the truth is given an absolutism in this quotation, Hubmaier's confidence in his appraisal of it is humble and open to critique. Yoder's defense of his translation is particularly telling, regarding how the slogan is absolutist but not abstract: "According to the preference of editor Yoder, the less elegant and more literal translation sometimes renders best the nuance of the parallel to the cross and resurrection of Christ. The point is not that truth is timeless or never dies, but that it rises again, that it cannot be kept down."

The Rule of Theology:
Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Theology and Truthfulness

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Introduction

One of the biggest challenges currently facing theology is that religious statements look like other kinds of statements. For example, the sentence 'God spoke to me' has the same structure as the sentence 'Mary spoke to me.' This similarity in form makes it all too easy to assume that the criteria we would employ to determine the meaning of these sentences should also be similar. If Mary spoke to me, it would have been possible for someone else to overhear what she said, and so also, it might be assumed, with God speaking. I know possible ways of verifying whether Mary spoke, but how does one go about verifying that God spoke? In fact, how does one go about verifying the truthfulness of any religious statement? I would like to address two related challenges to religious language. The first challenge concerns the nature of religious discourse and how it can be distinguished from other discourses. The second concerns the truthfulness of religious statements.

Theology as Consistency

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) rejects any suggestion that the Christian is in possession of facts that the non-Christian doesn't have. It seems to make sense that our beliefs are based on facts and therefore people with different beliefs are drawing on different facts. Yet, we could imagine an individual who acknowledges the facts of Christianity without believing them. We could think of an historian who can lay out the historical facts concerning the life of Jesus while not believing that Jesus was the Messiah. There is, then, a difference between *acknowledging* facts and *appropriating* them. For Kierkegaard the individual is the difference, because facts do not come with predetermined commitments. Yet it is often assumed that if someone will admit to certain facts, then a particular belief or activity will follow. However, no particular actions necessarily follow from the facts about Jesus, or from any other facts, for that matter. Belief, then, is not a set of facts but rather a passion that transforms a fact into a fact for the believer.[1]

Kierkegaard insists that Christianity leaves the world as it is while changing the individual.[2] But how is the Christian different? The goal of the Christian, according to the Danish philosopher, is to become a self whose criterion is God. In existing as a self with the consciousness of being directly before God, the Christian is distinguished by a theological understanding of that existence. This transformation results not from 'revealed' facts but from an understanding that one is always living in the presence of God. What differentiates the believer from the non-believer is a theological perspective on the world.

If, for Kierkegaard, appropriation is the key to becoming a theological self, then it seems to follow that this self is to be identified with something interior, hidden, known only to the individual. However, Kierkegaard argues that the believer is the one whose life lies in the consistency of the good. Consistency is the ability to properly order one's capacities or powers with the aim of producing a harmonious movement. Inconsistency attacks that harmony, resulting in chaos, lack of motion, and ultimately lack of a self. The theological [dimension] is, therefore, neither a set of doctrines nor an inner experience but the ordering of beliefs and activities in one's life so that this life is understood to be measured by the criterion of being before God.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) suggests that we should think of the orderliness of theology along the lines of a grammar. For example, when someone talks about the soul being spiritual and therefore non-corporeal, there might be some confusion if it is also said that the soul leaves the body. Wittgenstein replies that it will all depend on how one uses the words 'spiritual' and 'soul'.[3] We can't determine if there is confusion concerning these words apart from noting how they are being used. It is, then, only in their regular use that we can determine what words mean, and this is where the metaphor of grammar is helpful. According to Wittgenstein, theology has a similar task, of representing the orderliness of religious words and beliefs. Unfortunately, his identification of theology with grammar has too often been misunderstood, stemming from the notion that a grammar provides rules. From this, some theologians have argued that the basic rules of theology remain the same, no matter what the context, and that these rules stand independently of their applications. Both of these claims are rejected by Wittgenstein.

At the heart of Wittgenstein's argument concerning rules is the matter of identifying when a rule has been followed. An example given by Wittgenstein

is that of a student learning how to add.[4] The student is told to write out a series of numbers, counting by 2's, up to 1000, which he does successfully. When the student is told to continue past 1000, the student writes 1004, 1008, 1012, at which point he is stopped and told he is continuing the series incorrectly. The student responds by saying that he took the order 'Count by 2's' to mean 'Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, and so on'. The problem facing the teacher lies in clarifying to the student how the rule 'n+2' is to be followed, since the issue is not the rule but following the rule. The teacher would therefore have to show that following the rule 'n+2' means that after 1000 comes 1002. However, a troubling problem is raised at this point: If the teacher has to show the student that following the rule 'n+2' means that after 1000 comes 1002, wouldn't the same thing have to be done for what follows 1866 or 100034 or, in fact, every number? The problem lies not only in how the rule is followed at a certain point but how it is followed at any point. "It would almost be more correct to say, not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new decision was needed at every stage."[5] If a new decision has to be made at every stage of following a rule, the very idea of rule-following seems to be undermined.

Does Wittgenstein hold that there is no such thing as rule-following? The answer is no. According to him, the problem lies in thinking that a rule is something that always needs interpreting. The obvious response to this claim is to wonder what it means to follow a rule if it is not an interpretation. That is, what is the relationship between the rule and an action understood to be a case of 'obeying the rule'? The common assumption regarding rules is that they exist independently of their applications. It is this distance between rule and application which requires interpretation. However, Wittgenstein undercuts this assumption, arguing that a rule is nothing but the consistency of applications.

The nature of being able to 'carry on' should be stressed here. Borrowing from Kierkegaard, knowing a rule is not a matter of knowing particular facts but rather maintaining a consistency within one's life. This means, then, that if one is asked to justify an instance of following a rule, ultimately it will come down to one's life.

> If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."[6]

It is, then, the customs and habits that we engage in that ground the rules we have, making them both meaningful and effective.

Returning to our original example, the statement 'God spoke to me', both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein agree that its meaningfulness can be determined only by referring to a context. If it is meant to be a religious statement, it will then be understood against a theological background. Kierkegaard describes this background as the consistency of the theological self which understands itself as living before God. Wittgenstein sees this background as the set of religious habits and customs the individual engages in. In both cases, theological discourse makes it possible for religious statements to be meaningful. However, a troubling question arises at this point: Is truth nothing more than what people agree on?

Theology as Criterion

According to Wittgenstein, a belief finds its meaning within a set of habits and customs rooted in the world. An example he gives is that of measurement.[7] He distinguishes between methods of measurement, for example Fahrenheit and Celsius, and results of measurement. There is, however, also the judgment of measuring temperature which requires, in part, a consistency in results. Methods of measurement would make no sense without this consistency. Similarly, any habit or custom that did not have it would be meaningless. A language, or language-game, requires an agreement in judgment concerning the world, and it is this broad agreement, encompassing beliefs and activities, that constitutes a form of life.[8]

For Wittgenstein, religious beliefs are not, strictly speaking, propositions.[9] Does this mean that these beliefs represent human attitudes imposed on the world? Does the fact that someone holds a religious belief tell us something only about the attitude of that individual, and nothing about the world? Wittgenstein rejects this conclusion on the grounds provided above, namely that if a religious belief is to be meaningful, it has to be associated with customs and practices. These customs provide the world with its meaning and truth.

What is being identified here as the truthfulness of a belief is the consistency of results arising from the customs and practices that give the belief its meaningfulness. The presupposition of this claim is that it is impossible for there to be a form of life consistently at odds with the world.

> Imagine a person whose memory could not retain *what* the word
> 'pain' meant — so that he constantly called different things by
> that name — but nevertheless used the word in a way fitting in with
> the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain — in short he uses it
> as we all do. Here I should like to say: a wheel that can be turned
> though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism.[10]

The word 'pain' is understood both to have a place in our language and to
refer to something in the world. However, in the above example, the amnesiac
is using the word both properly, in terms of its place in the language, and
improperly, referring to different things. Here we would say that the example
is impossible because it would be impossible both to use the word properly
and to be wrong. It is impossible because the consistency of a custom
presupposes a degree of fittedness with the facts of the world or, in other
words, a degree of truthfulness.

Insofar as theology represents the set of practices associated with religious
beliefs, it can be understood as providing the criteria or logic for evaluating the
truthfulness of those beliefs. Previously we saw how theology as grammar
provides the *meaningfulness* of religious beliefs, but we now see that it also
provides the *truthfulness* of these beliefs. It is, therefore, possible to evaluate
whether the claim 'God spoke to me' is truthful by referring to the theological
grounds which make it logically possible. Furthermore, the claim can be
evaluated by standards independent of both the individual and the observer.

Much of Kierkegaard's writings is taken up with evaluating individuals
and how they measure up to the religious [criterion]. *Stages On Life's Way*
(1845) and its story of a diarist in love is one example. Having become engaged,
the diarist moves toward ideality, considering only the possibility of love. On the
other hand, the girl is moving towards reality and being in love. Unhappy love
arises in the diarist because he is unable to see her in actuality, instead considering
her only in ideality. While he talks at great lengths about the girl and what is
best for their relationship, "it is immediately apparent that he has only himself
to deal with — and not with her as an actuality outside of himself. . . ."[11]

The movement of the diarist towards ideality is spurred by religious
considerations. His life and, in particular, his love, must always be considered
in light of the religious. The problem, in his mind, is that he cannot comprehend
how he can develop his religious understanding while attending to the

responsibilities and duties of a husband. Therefore, telling himself that he must attend to his religious commitments while giving the girl the possibility of making her life come out all right, he provokes the break-up of the relationship. This, Kierkegaard tells us, is demonic: "that with a presentiment of a possibility he is unwilling to relate himself to himself in his religious idea but understands her in esthetic categories and cheats the ethical a little, as if he were — if he is guilty — less guilty because she came out of it all right. . . ."[12]

The key to understanding the diarist is that he anticipates being religious but is unable to make it actual. According to Kierkegaard, "if [the diarist] had been acquainted with the world and with the opposite sex, he would have come out better, that is, if he would have cared about this knowledge."[13] Here we get a glimpse of happy religiosity: to care about knowledge of the world religiously. The religiousness of the diarist is unhappy because it cannot resolve itself in the world, remaining only in ideality and possibility. Put differently, the logic of Christianity requires that it be always grounded in the activities of the world, though always with a Christian understanding.

Where Kierkegaard goes further than Wittgenstein is in arguing that the truth of Christianity applies also to non-Christians. The focus of *Sickness Unto Death* (1849) is on how one becomes a self. The book is structured around a phenomenological examination of the various possible forms of becoming a self might take. According to Kierkegaard, people who lack any sense of having a self are in despair even though they don't realize it. This is possible because of what he calls the 'obstinacy of truth'. People who are not aware of being a self are still suffering the consequences of not being a self, because the criterion of truth is not *consciousness* of the truth but truth *itself*. It is by virtue of this operation of truth that Kierkegaard can both describe and evaluate people in terms of having selfhood.

That the selves of individuals can be evaluated presupposes Kierkegaard's definition of the self, namely that there is a particular and proper criterion for measuring the self. In order for the self to be a self, there must be something by which the self can be constituted and by which it defines itself. Those who suffer the greatest despair are those who either make themselves their own criterion or make defiance against God their criterion. The reason despair remains is that there is only one proper criterion for the self, only one ruler by which one can properly constitute a self, and that is God. If adopting the criterion of the world, or the eternal, or oneself leads to despair, adopting the

criterion of God leads to being a self. The individual who adopts God as the criterion for the self gains the intensification of reality possible only through God and thereby possesses the truthfulness required to be a self. By being 'before God', the individual finds the proper grounds for being a self.

In developing the two criteria of truth and God, Kierkegaard provides a rich description of truth that accounts for the two most basic requirements of any theory of truth. With the first criterion, we have an analytical tool that can be applied both logically and phenomenologically: the lives of all human beings can be measured by the truth regardless of their own consciousness. With the second criterion, we have the grounds for establishing identity. It is not enough that a thing be described with regards to what it is; reference must also be made to what it ought to be. Ultimately, for Kierkegaard, the theological life is the most truthful life because it is the only life that accounts for the whole of one's life.

Conclusion

Theology, therefore, functions as a criterion in two different ways. First, it provides the set of beliefs and practices within which any particular Christian activity finds its meaningfulness. In order to make sense of the claim 'God spoke to me', it would be necessary to identify the understanding of the individual who made the claim. Is the individual Christian? What kind of encounter was it? Second, theology functions as a criterion insofar as it is the logic of religious discourse. So, not only is it necessary to establish the theological background of the claim 'God spoke to me', it must also be determined whether this claim properly fits that background. For religious discourse to be meaningful it must also be truthful, and it is theology which lays out the necessary logical structure. Theology is, therefore, not doctrines or dogmas — though it must articulate these. Nor is theology an inner orientation, though it must certainly include this.

What I have tried to show is that theology is the setting, composed of beliefs, customs, and habits, for our religious discourse. Theology provides both the sense and the reference for our religious language, and therefore is the thing that makes religious language possible. Theology is, therefore, the rule against which we as religious people measure ourselves in order to determine how we stand in relation to the truth.

Notes

1 Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David Swenson and Howard Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 103.

2 "[The knight of faith] makes the movements of infinity, but he does this with such correctness and assurance that he constantly gets the finite out of it, and there is not a second when one has a notion of anything else." Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*.

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. and trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, ed. G. H. von Wright (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), §127.

4 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), §185.

5 *Ibid.*, §186.   6 *Ibid.*, §217.   7 *Ibid.*, §242.   8 *Ibid.*

9 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955), 6.522.

10 Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §271.

11 Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, ed., trans., and introduced by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings, vol. 11 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 425.

12 *Ibid.*, 427.

13 *Ibid.*, 434.

Mennonites, Gender, and the Bible in the 1920s and '30s

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Halfway across the Atlantic Ocean, Vinora Weaver and Vesta Zook threw their bonnets overboard.[1] The two young women were sailing for Turkey, where they would join the burgeoning ranks of Mennonites serving as overseas missionaries. Their new opportunity exemplified the social and religious changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that brought Mennonite women into new spheres of church activity.[2] Women taught in Sunday schools, and enrolled in higher education; they became missionaries, and started women's groups to raise funds for overseas relief. In the Mennonite world, as in the rest of American religious life, such challenges to traditional women's work did not come without community disruption. Eventually, these

gender matters would come to a head in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s and '30s.[3]

During this time of religious conflict, Mennonites relied on the Bible to guide their response to women's new activities.[4] Articles in the denomination's official paper, *Gospel Herald*, reveal that Mennonites labored to maintain their concept of biblical authority amidst an onslaught of ideas about gender from the wider American debate.[5] The Mennonites' biblicism did not result in a systematic notion of the proper role of women, but articles in the *Herald* on topics ranging from plain dress and motherhood to Bible heroines illustrate how they oriented their debate about gender around their understanding of the Bible's normative demands.

While Mennonites responded to changing gender norms, they certainly noted the rising tide of Fundamentalist speech against women's expanding role in religious and cultural life.[6] Fundamentalists sought to strengthen the church by calling men back to powerful leadership, and by questioning women's ability and authority to move beyond the duties ascribed to them in the Victorian cult of domesticity.[7] Mennonites did not share the Fundamentalists' ideological position on women. But the *Herald* printed some articles from conservative Protestant sources on motherhood and fashion, at least partly because these sources invoked an emphasis on scripture which the *Herald* editors appreciated.

While Mennonites were significantly influenced by conservative Protestants, they also encountered liberal ideas on gender. Protestant liberals justified their call for women's full participation in society based on thematic readings of the Bible that focused on Jesus' relationship with women in the Gospels and strong female characters throughout scripture.[8] Mennonites writing in the *Herald* sometimes sympathized with this liberal notion of biblical womanhood. However, these writers never went so far as to argue for women's authority to preach, because of Pauline injunctions against women's leadership.

Mennonites faced many religious and cultural challenges in the 1920s and '30s. Editors and readers of *Gospel Herald* debated the issues, including the question of proper gender norms. Articles on gender in the *Herald* served two purposes: (1) Mennonites positioned themselves in relation to changing gender ideals in American Protestantism, and (2) Mennonites dealt with more immediate community problems, including some women's rejection of the bonnet. Mennonites dictated plain dress to support community nonconformity, not because modern fashions posed a danger to men. They imagined

motherhood as a special role of Christian nurture, with mothers of the Bible serving as the ultimate models; and they posited Christian womanhood as a possibility for heroic and faithful action by Mennonite women — as long as it did not call for the unscriptural practice of a woman's speaking in church. In the end, Mennonites circumvented the ideological positions on gender typified in Fundamentalist ire and Modernist emancipation. But the articles in the *Herald* also betray how difficult and messy a community's search for strict biblicism in gender concerns could be.

The Conservative Influence: Mennonites on Motherhood and Fashion
The *Herald* of this period featured several articles on motherhood and fashion that seemed to embrace the Fundamentalist's concern with reestablishing Victorian gender norms.[9] Mennonite writers and contributors borrowed many of these articles from outside sources, including conservative Protestant magazines and secular newspapers. Only a small number of articles appeared, and the editors placed them on the "Family Circle" page, not on pages dedicated to doctrine and church news. This placement seems directed at women readers and detracts from the paper's more egalitarian comments on dress found on other pages.

Changes in the early twentieth century threatened to upset the idea of the woman as the "angel in the home." In response, Fundamentalists argued that a mother should use her education to bring up righteous children, lead her husband to faith, and suffer like Christ for the sake of her family.[10] Mennonites followed Fundamentalists in their effort to defend Victorian notions of motherhood.

Articles on motherhood in the *Herald* may come as a shock to the modern reader. A survey of them might lead to the strange conclusion that Mennonites believed there was no better mother than a dead mother. During the period of study, articles on motherhood appeared in more than ten percent of the issues, with an overwhelming number of them on those departed. Predominant were articles containing popular Victorian language praising a dead mother's self-sacrifice, saving qualities, and religious influence.[11] A submission by John D. Burkholder from Harrisonburg exemplified this sentimental turn: "It was mother who nursed me in my infancy, mother who guided me in my youth, and it was mother who gave me safe counsel as I was growing old. It was mother's hallowed influence that guided me into the safest paths, and it was her influence that called to me when I went astray."[12]

The *Herald* also featured many articles on a mother's physical and

spiritual sacrifices for her children. While most articles depicted the daily sacrifices required to raise children, some carried the physical sacrifice even further. In one *Herald* piece reprinted from the Protestant interdenominational magazine, *Illustrator*, a mother burns her arms in an effort to save her baby from a crib on fire.[13] Answering her daughter's question about the incident, she replies, "In rescuing you from the flames I was burned, as you see. I carry these scars because I loved you."[14]

Although Mennonites participated fully in the sentimental language about mothers available in Protestant culture, they also added biblical content to their understanding of motherhood.[15] Mennonites writing for the *Herald* extolled the bravery of Moses' mother, Hannah's prayers for Samuel, Lydia's faithful household, and Mary's ideal motherhood as examples for all women.[16] Mennonite authors also focused on the duties of children to honor their Christian mothers. Although these articles touched on the biblical command to obey parents, they strongly reflected popular language about respecting a mother's sacrifice. From Detroit, Anna Smucker wrote of a child's duty, "Never forget where your mother lost her freshness and youthful beauty — it was in self-denying toil and suffering for your sake."[17]

The *Herald* also printed stories about flappers and fashion that signal a conservative Protestant influence. Fundamentalism's ascendancy coincided exactly with the emergence of the flapper, the dangerous young woman who smoked, drank, and led men down the path to perdition.[18] To respond to her threat, Fundamentalists labeled her immoral and a sign of the end times.[19] Although Mennonites did not spill as much ink as Fundamentalists on the subject, the presence of articles on the flapper and her fashions denotes the community's concern over these women who crossed gender boundaries and followed fashion's dictates. Like the articles on motherhood, writings on flappers and fashion appeared on the *Herald's* "Family Circle" page, most likely directed to women readers.

Herald editors included several articles that decried the flapper's propensity for breaking down necessary social distinctions. In an article reprinted from the Mennonite Brethren in Christ's *Gospel Banner*, the writer called for long hair because "purity and morality can never be maintained except there be a distinct line of demarcation between the sexes."[20] Not only did the sexes need to be distinct, dress should denote a person's character. *Herald* editors included a newspaper article on dress reform efforts in New

York City that stated the ultimate problem: "There was a time when the bad woman could be told from the good woman by her dress. For the last few years this distinction has been made impossible because sweet, pure girls have thoughtlessly adopted the same dress as the woman of the streets."[21] For Mennonites, modern dress posed a danger to a community's ability to rely on dress as a marker of an inner reality.

Fashion, flappers, and Victorian mothering ideals featured prominently on the *Herald's* "Family Circle" page throughout the period of Fundamentalist-Modernist debates. Yet the number of articles on fashion and flappers paled in comparison to the number about plain dress and nonconformity on other *Herald* pages. But when confronted with changing ideals about motherhood and fashion in wider culture, Mennonites borrowed articles from other sources more often than they produced their own. It is clear from the ongoing presence of these articles that many contributors and readers found these conservative ideas compelling.

The Liberal Influence — Mennonites on Womanhood

While Mennonites continued printing articles that borrowed from conservative sources, they also began featuring original articles based on a more liberal idea of Christian womanhood. Protestant liberals shirked traditional readings of the Bible, which determined gender roles according to Paul's epistles. Instead, they looked to female characters in the Bible and Jesus' interaction with women to support their claims for women's emancipation.[22] Mennonites in the *Herald* never called for women's preaching or leadership, for that would contradict their sense of scripture. Yet, these writers, most of whom were women, did develop a concept of biblical womanhood that reflected more liberal claims and determined women's worth apart from their relationship with men.

As early as 1920, Mennonite women wrote reflections for the *Herald* on the positive contribution of biblical women. Some pointed to the women called by Jesus. Margaret Johns wrote, "When Jesus was upon the earth He recognized woman as a being capable of good works and large enough to live that fullness of life which He alone can supply."[23] Contributors called Mennonite women to model biblical characters, including Mary and Martha, Hannah and Miriam, Dorcas and Priscilla.[24] The *Herald* also offered numerous Bible studies and Sunday School lessons on the lives of women in the Bible, including Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Hannah, and Martha.[25]

In the end, *Herald* editors printed articles that hinted at liberal uses of Scripture under two conditions: that they avoid claims to woman's authority to lead, and that more traditional claims about womanhood provide a balance to this liberal understanding. At the same time, these articles on womanhood undoubtedly met a wider readership, as they were not limited to the "Family Circle" page. Editors evenly spread them between the family page, Sunday School lessons, and other church news. Some even appeared in the *Herald's* most prominent section, the "Doctrinal Page." These articles on womanhood, like those on motherhood and fashion, complicate our understanding of how Mennonites used the Bible to determine proper gender roles and how wider cultural disputes influenced the Mennonite debate.

Distinctive Mennonite Concerns: Plain Dress and Coverings
The *Herald* included many articles on gender that borrowed ideas, if not actual words, from both Fundamentalists and Modernist sources. But readers encountered a far greater number of pieces that touched on the distinctive concerns of the Mennonite community and revealed a form of biblicism unknown to their Protestant peers. These articles appeared primarily on the *Herald*'s prominent "Doctrinal Page." There, Mennonite writers argued that nonconformity and biblical authority demanded that both women and men dress modestly and that women observe the New Testament ordinance of the devotional head covering. In these articles Mennonites displayed what historian Theron Schlabach has called their different set of fundamentals, a strict biblicism embodied in a nonconformed community.[26]

"Dress is the most talked about subject in existence," wrote *Herald* editors in 1925.[27] A survey of articles shows that, among Mennonites at least, this truly was the case. *Herald* articles reflect that Mennonites understood how their commitment to distinct dress was unpopular with Christians on both sides. Debates in Fundamentalist magazines and the secular press focused on the immorality of women's dress and its ill effects on society. This danger was an afterthought for Mennonites. Writers in the *Herald* asserted that a biblical standard of dress for both men and women measured each member's willingness to live within a biblical, nonconformed community.

Herald articles consistently affirmed a biblical mandate for plain dress. Some writers touched on God's creation of clothing and how dress signaled a

relationship to the Lord in the Old Testament.[28] Numerous articles emphasized New Testament restrictions and instructions for dress.[29] Others showed how the Bible stood firm against ornaments and fashion.[30] An article on the "Bible Principles of Attire" made the choice between Bible and the world quite clear: "The people of the world think we are foolish to dress as we do. We think that the people of the world are foolish to dress as they do. Which is right? If the Bible is right, then we are right."[31]

In the *Herald*, Mennonites stressed biblical standards of dress for all because the entire community's nonconformity was at stake. Mennonite revivalist George R. Brunk defended the practice of plain dress in a question-and-answer article. He asked, "What is the use of so persistently advocating dress regulation when nearly all the professed Christian world ignores it?" His answer: "For the same reason that we testify against war, secretism, life insurance, etc., because the unpopularity of a subject does not release [us] from our obligation to 'declare all the counsel of God.'"[32] Some *Herald* writers reminded readers that dress regulation and nonconformity were not limited by gender. Alice Miller of Orrville, Ohio recalled a sermon on dress, directed at sisters, in which the preacher claimed that the "Bible doesn't say much to men."[33] In response, Miller called all Mennonites to nonconformity and challenged men to let their clothing identify them. "Brother, if you want men to know you are in business for your King, why not put on a uniform to show to the world, what your life work is?"[34]

Mennonites also displayed a distinctive approach to biblical authority in their discussion of the devotional covering, or prayer veil. Earlier in the century, *Herald* editor Daniel Kauffman listed the covering among the biblical ordinances necessary for right church practice.[35] As a result, most of the dialogue in the *Herald* focused on the biblical foundation for women's head covering. In one of several columns on this subject *Herald* editors gave the standard reason for the practice: "The believing Christian woman should wear a devotional covering because it is plainly commanded in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16."[36] Contributors to the *Herald* wrote about how the covering manifested certain claims of scripture, particularly nonconformity and the order of creation. Some writers extolled it as a sign of "separation from the world" and of being a "peculiar people."[37] Others determined that the covering ordinance required plain headgear, not a fashionable bonnet. A few writers focused on the order of creation found in 1

Corinthians.[38] Articles appearing repeatedly in the *Herald* reinforced the affirmation of women's veiling as a biblical ordinance and sign of distinctiveness.

 Herald articles on plain dress and coverings reflected a particular biblicism that set Mennonites apart from the wider American religious scene. Both liberal and conservative Protestants overlooked the mandate for coverings found in 1 Corinthians, and conservatives applied dress standards only to women. While Mennonites could abide some conservative and liberal thought on motherhood, fashion, and womanhood, they had to establish their own position on dress in order to maintain the biblical posture that made them distinctive and expressed their commitment to nonconformity.

Conclusion

In the 1920s and '30s, conservative Protestants agonized about flappers who flirted and smoked. Liberals worried that church and society wrongly restricted women's God-given gifts. But Mennonites had much more limited concerns: young women were throwing their bonnets overboard, and that act defied Mennonites' understanding of themselves as biblical, nonconformed people. Articles on gender in the *Herald* offer a helpful vantage point for considering several questions about the Mennonite experience in the twentieth century.

 First, it was difficult, yet possible, for Mennonites to maintain their particular form of biblicism in the midst of heated debates about the Bible's inspiration and authority. As the *Herald* articles on gender show, Mennonites allowed for some encroaching ideas, mostly from the Fundamentalist side. But the vast majority of these articles affirmed a particular Mennonite hermeneutic.

 Second, the *Herald* articles provide clues to how Mennonites dealt with changes in the lives of real women. In the 1920s and '30s, Mennonite women increased their participation in higher education and church publishing.[39] But in other areas, church leaders began to restrict women's activities, particularly in the case of single, women missionaries and women's groups raising funds for them; leaders referenced 1 Corinthians as they curtailed women's activities that crossed the line.[40] Mennonites lacked the particular gender ideologies of their conservative and liberal Protestant peers. The issue for them was not to push all women back into the home or out into public life.[41] Instead, they measured every activity against their sense of biblical authority and nonconformity.

Third, an analysis of the Mennonite response to gender questions in the midst of the religious conflicts of the period can shed light on other periods of conflict.[42] The 1970s and '80s presented another era of American religious controversy in which gender questions became a flashpoint.[43] It would be interesting to see how Mennonites both borrowed from and resisted rhetorical resources from the wider conflict, and how a Bible-centered reading of gender norms established in the 1920s and '30s fared throughout the rest of the century.

Finally, the *Herald* articles show us the dynamics of Mennonite borrowing from outside cultural and religious resources. Mennonites could not avoid questions presented by the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, nor could they escape answers provided by their conservative and liberal peers. In the *Herald*, we can see that Mennonites were willing to borrow, but they did so selectively and sometimes constructively. They resisted both conservative Protestant ideas about women's moral incapacity and the liberal assertion that women had the right to preach. They borrowed Victorian ideas about motherhood, but gave them an added biblical content. In the end, the *Herald* debate shows us that these gender matters in the early twentieth century provoked Mennonites to consider what they were willing to borrow from the outside world and what they needed to produce for themselves. The resulting rhetoric on gender would shape the lives of Mennonite women for decades to come.

Notes

Abbreviations: *GH – Gospel Herald*; *MQR – Mennonite Quarterly Review*

[1] Vinora Weaver Salzman, *Day by Day – Year by Year* (n.p.: James Juhnke, 1982), 26, 17-18; quoted in James Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America*, 1890-1930 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 251.

[2] Sharon Klingelsmith, "Women in the Mennonite Church, 1900-1930," *MQR* 54 (July 1980): 163-207.

[3] See Betty DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) and Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[4] Mennonites in the early twentieth century trusted the Bible "as a guide to salvation and the true knowledge of God," according to C. Norman Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible, 1750-1950," *MQR* 41 (October 1967): 316.

[5] "'Maleness' and 'femaleness' have meant different things to different generations of American Protestants . . . even while the language of gender has provided a remarkable constant framework for understanding the progression from sin to redemption that is the grand narrative of Protestant experience": Susan Juster, "The Spirit and the Flesh: Gender, Language, and Sexuality in American Protestantism," in *New Directions in American Religious History*, ed. Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 335.

[6] Although Fundamentalists and Modernists were subsets with the larger groups of conservative and liberal Protestants, I use the terms "Fundamentalist" and "conservative" interchangeably. I do the same with "Modernist" and "liberal."

[7] See DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*. See critique of DeBerg by Michael S. Hamilton, "Women, Public Ministry, and American Fundamentalism, 1920-1950," *Religion and American Culture* 3 (Summer 1993): 171-96.

[8] Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "American Women and the Bible: The Nature of Woman as a Hermeneutical Issue," in *Feminist Perspectives in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 11; Kathi Kern, *Mrs. Stanton's Bible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 78-82.

[9] DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*, 13-58.

[10] Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 129-32.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] John D. Burkholder, "It was Mother," *GH* 28, no. 7 (May 16, 1935): 150.

[13] The group that also published the popular International Sunday School Lessons series out of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania printed the *Illustrator*.

[14] "This Is My Blood," *GH* 13, no. 6 (May 6, 1919): 122.

[15] My preliminary research shows that Mennonites writing on motherhood differed from Fundamentalists in this respect.

[16] Salena Wade Miller, "A Mother's Responsibility to her Daughter: How Win her Confidence," *GH* 12, no. 5 (May 1, 1919): 78; Ruth Rohrer, "Mother in the Home," *GH* 15, no. 2 (April 13, 1922): 38; Anna Loucks, "The Ideal Christian — In the Home," *GH* 20, no. 5 (May 5, 1927): 99; Anna Smucker, "An Ideal Mother," *GH* 26, no. 11 (June 15, 1933): 230.

[17] Anna Smucker, "An Ideal Mother," 230.

[18] DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*, 117.

[19] *Ibid.*, 123.

[20] "Who Started this Hair Bobbing?," *GH* 28, no. 42 (January 16, 1936): 886. *Herald* editors printed this piece, submitted "by a sister in Parnell, Iowa," with this editorial note: "It will be seen that the writer is not antagonistic to the fashions of this world, but objects to prevailing styles because of their indecency. Those who have made the matter a study will find in this an added reason for opposing fashion domination among Christian people."

[21] Wallace Farmer, "Indecency in Dress," *GH* 12, no. 9 (May 29, 1919): 155.

[22] Jennifer Graber, "The Life of Jesus as Critical Norm in Nineteenth Century Women's Literature of Christian Protest," 1998; author's copy.

[23] Margaret Johns, "Women of the Bible and of Today — In the Church," *GH* 15, no. 23 (September 7, 1922): 442.

[24] Sadie Brubaker, "How About Martha and Mary?" *GH* 16, no. 14 (July 5, 1923): 278; John L. Horst, "Meditations on Ruth's Decision," *GH* 18, no. 22 (August 27, 1925): 142; Martha E. Hostetler, "The Place of the Christian Woman in the Church," *GH* 24, no. 43 (January 21, 1932): 918; Minerva Kauffman, "Mary," *GH* 26, no. 4 (April 27, 1933): 86; D. E. Cripe, "Naomi," *GH* 26, no. 29 (October 19, 1933): 614.

[25] "Esther Saves her People," *GH* 15, no. 18 (August 3, 1922): 343; "Deborah," *GH* 26, no. 14 (July 6, 1933): 279; "Ruth," *GH* 26, no. 17 (July 27, 1933): 359; "Hannah," *GH* 26, no. 18 (August 3, 1933): 375; "Martha," *GH* 28, no. 19 (August 8, 1935): 423.

[26] Theron F. Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel: Mission and the Mennonite Church, 1863-1944* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 114-15.

[27] "Present Day Issues and How to Meet Them," *GH* 18, no. 2 (April 9, 1925): 33.

[28] E. J. Berkey, "Bible Teaching on Dress," *GH* 16, no. 28 (October 11, 1923): 576.

[29] See Susie Hess, "Why Modest Apparel is Fitting with the Christian Spirit," *GH* 15, no. 6 (June 11, 1922): 123; E. J. Berkey, "Bible Teaching on Dress," *GH* 16, no. 28 (October 11, 1923): 576; J. B. Gehman, "Bible Principles of Attire," *GH* 26, no. 47 (February 18, 1932): 1010; T. E. Schrock, "Standards of the Word on Dress — Suggestions on How These May Be Maintained," *Gospel Herald — Christian Doctrine* (July 18, 1935): 358; and P. Hostetler, "The Dress Question Analyzed," *GH* 28, no. 30 (October 24, 1935): 651.

[30] L. C. Schrock, "Bible Teaching on Dress," *GH* 16, no. 20 (Aug 16, 1923): 402-03.

[31] J. B. Gehman, "Bible Principles of Attire," *GH* 26, no. 47 (February 18, 1932): 1010.

[32] George R. Brunk, "The Bible and Dress," *GH* 12, no. 18 (July 31, 1919): 330.

[33] Alice Miller, "The Dress Question," *GH* 30, no. 20 (August 12, 1937): 445.

[34] *Ibid.*, 445.

[35] Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War*, 115-16.

[36] "Scripture Light on Oft-Repeated Inquiries," *GH* 18, no. 12 (June 18, 1925): 243; see also D. L. Miller, "The Prayer Veil," *GH* 13, no. 3 (April 15, 1920): 50; Ira Landis, "Prayer Head Covering," *Gospel Herald — Christian Doctrine* (July 2, 1927): 377; and "Christian Ordinances," *Gospel Herald — Christian Doctrine* (October 10, 1935): 610.

[37] "Why the Bonnet?" *GH* 26, no. 4 (April 27, 1933): 81; see also "Report of Y[oung] P[erson's] B[ible] Meeting Program on the Devotional Covering — The Questions and Their Answers," *GH* 20, no. 16 (July 21, 1927): 384; and S. B. Wenger, "That Beautiful Bonnet," *GH* 28, no. 1 (April 4, 1935): 10.

[38] "Our Young People — Devotional Covering," *GH* 12, no. 21 (August 21, 1919): 391; John F. Bressler, "The Devotional Covering," *GH* 15, no. 29 (October 29, 1922): 562; and "Christian Ordinances," *Gospel Herald — Christian Doctrine* (October 10, 1935): 610.

[39] Klingelsmith, 163-207.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Michael Hamilton has shown that conservatives and mainline Protestants did not always stay in step with their rhetoric about gender. Fundamentalists accepted certain kinds of women's ministries, while the more liberal wing of mainline Protestantism often failed to live up to their speech about women's emancipation. The disconnect between speech and action is a fruitful source for historical reflection.

[42] See Stephan Ainlay and Fred Kniss, "Mennonites and Conflict: Re-Examining Mennonite History and Contemporary Life," *MQR* 72 (April 1998): 121-39 and Fred Kniss, *Disquiet in the Land: Cultural Conflict in American Mennonite Communities* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

[43] DeBerg argues that Fundamentalists in the 1970s and '80s inherited their language about gender from arguments created during the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates. See DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*, 153.

Does the Ballot Box Lie Outside the Perfection of Christ?

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Three typical ways of resolving conflicts in this world include negotiation, violence, and voting. Now, granted that voting is actually a form of negotiated settlement, I think it has certain aspects about it that warrant separate treatment. Notice that violence, and especially killing, is the ultimate way of privileging one's own values. Negotiation, by contrast, may often take the other's views into account to varying degrees. Negotiation offers a wide range of possibilities, much of which involves coercive power, or at least advantaged positions.

Voting is a relatively peaceful form of conflict resolution, but as the 2000 and 2002 American elections make clear, voting is still about resolving conflicts, or at least deciding between conflictual partners. For, as we have often heard, reasonable people differ. And they differ first and foremost about their vision of the ideal world and how we ought best to get there. So to participate in an election, in a modern, stable democracy, is to take part in a (relatively peaceful) power struggle to define a nation's vision and path for getting there.

But I should like to make three points before I turn again to voting. First, while violence privileges one's own values, standing aside likewise privileges the values of the violent. This is important to consider if we have values of our own that we wish to advance in the public marketplace of ideas or a vision of the world that we wish to further. Second, I do not wish to imply that I am advocating relativism. On the contrary, I think it is entirely possible and advisable to accept the fact of pluralism, respecting and appreciating our

differences, while remaining committed to our values in a way that is both humbly open to reconsideration and intelligently opposed to the notion that all values are equally matters of taste.

Third, when conflict leads to violence, especially in the form of war, it is invariably the winners who think they have justice and indeed just cause on their side, believing that they are being responsible in their actions. Invariably, both sides of any conflict think this to be the case, the winners as well as the losers. *Newsweek* recently reported that Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, has a plaque on his desk that reads, "Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords." One astute reader responded, "Maybe Osama bin Laden has the same plaque on his desk. Some sport!"[1] It ought to be troubling to anyone that both sides of any war think their actions justifiable, and more than likely, if they are religious, that God is on their side. If nothing else, this should give us universal grounds for a prima facie bias against violence and war.

But it is to voting that I will now turn. Does the ballot box lie outside the perfection of Christ? This is not a question Mennonites ask themselves. Apart from no longer thinking in terms of "the perfection of Christ," participation in republican government has become an assumed practice of the modern [American] Mennonite. Yet this is a very important question for us to be asking at this juncture in Mennonite history.

Four modern trends make this discussion timely: humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, democracy, integration of Mennonites into surrounding society, and non-ethnic Mennonites with increasingly diverse cultural (and religious) background understandings. The first two of these have done much to erode our traditional position on peace and government respectively. Divided on the role of government, the more optimistic of us think the state can have real Christian values, supporting human rights and opposing the death penalty. The pessimists think the state is not to be "Christian" at all but rather a realistic force in the world, and therefore they do not criticize the state for employing lethal force in international affairs, even to advance narrowly nationalistic interests or to enforce the law locally by employing capital punishment. These pessimists we can identify with "Two Kingdom" ethics, most notably of the Schleitheim Confession of 1527; the optimists advocate a more universal understanding of ethics, both public and private.

Probably the most important text for defining the Anabaptist understanding of God's will in the world, at least with regard to violence and the state, is the Schleitheim Confession. The author Michael Sattler and those who met with him believed that the witness and model of Christ Jesus, as attested to in Scripture, called them to a different way of understanding the world and a different way of relating to others. This revolutionary way of being in the world involved setting aside violence as a means of relating to others or settling disputes. They went so far in following Jesus' admonitions that they would not take others to court, since that involves an adversarial coercion in asserting one's own will.

Still, wanting to be faithful to the full biblical record, they attempted to find a way to accommodate the seemingly contradictory witness of passages such as Romans 13, where Paul's admonitions include the apparent claim that God intends the government to employ violence on behalf of justice. Article Six of the Confession thus reads, "The sword is an ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and kills the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the law the sword is established over the wicked for punishment and for death, and the secular rulers are established to wield the same." On the issue of Christians being rulers, the Confession makes clear that Christ was asked to rule as king, but fled instead and taught his disciples to follow his example. It adds, "the rule of the government is according to the flesh, that of the Christians according to the spirit."[2] This neatly divides Anabaptist ethical understandings into two kingdoms — the state, and the reign of God as exemplified by the community of believers.

In the history that followed, a contrast has often been made between effectiveness and obedience. What deeply troubles me is what the emphasis on effectiveness inevitably does to diminish the gospel of peace, and what the reality of obedience has historically (and quite ironically) meant for the compounding of injustice in the world. According to one sociological study of Mennonites published in 1994, "As political participation rises, support plummets for nonresistance, for peacemaking, and for activism."[3] So much for effectiveness. As for obedience, an earlier study found that "although 87% of MC members believe a Christian should take no part in war, only 50% denied that the Vietnam War was necessary. . . ."[4] Presumably, their separatist understanding led far fewer than that to actually oppose the war in any way other than performing alternative service. Again in the 1994 study, the authors

found that Mennonites of all denominations, in both Canada and the United States, vote overwhelmingly conservative.

Again, reasonable persons will (and obviously do) differ on the propriety of this [pattern], but for our purposes we could benefit from an examination of what it means concretely. In the United States, it means a majority of Mennonites vote for the Republican Party. The platform most commonly advanced by Republican candidates has normally included (or even emphasized) support for the death penalty and a strong military, in addition to various pro-business policies and a bias towards tax cuts for the wealthiest 20 percent of the population. Republican candidates also tend to have a poor record in enacting or enforcing environmental protections. Picking out just the issue of the death penalty, it troubles me that the secular humanist organization Amnesty International has done more than the aggregate body of voting Mennonites to oppose the gross injustice of the death penalty as it is applied in the United States.

Yet, on the face of it, this voting record is entirely in keeping with the Two Kingdom understanding from Schleitheim forward. Those governing are obliged by the necessity of ordering the fallen world to employ weapons to defend and penalties to punish. It seems, however, that both sides of the Mennonite response run the real and manifest risk of losing our witness to the gospel of peace in relativism and irrelevance. As we emphasize effectiveness, the witness is lost in the realism of Just War arguments; and as we emphasize personal obedience, that either eschews or does not impinge upon our political involvement, that obedience becomes just one more personal choice in a world where freedom of choice is more important than substance of choice. If your ethics are not applicable to my world, why should I listen? Or worse: If even you don't apply your ethics to the world (except in your personal life), you are contributing to the relativism that fails to take ethics seriously as an obligation rather than a lifestyle choice.

By way of comparison, consider the Jains of India. The strictest observers take their principle of "ahimsa" or non-harming to an extreme that does not merely prohibit violence against people but adheres to such a strict vegetarianism that they will not personally farm because of the violence done to the worms, the plants, and the soil itself. They sweep the ground in front of them, wear masks to avoid accidental inhalation of insects, and do not boil their own water because of the microbes they would be killing. Yet, they seem

to have no theoretical difficulty with someone else doing these things for them. They will drink the boiled water and eat the farmed produce. These things do not hinder the spiritual purity — in their terms, the clarity of their karma — that they need for their eventual release from this world of suffering. The question, of course, for ourselves, is whether our Jesus ethic is merely a personal way of keeping our hands clean for our own salvation. If not, then why do we not apply our nonviolence more directly to our engagement with the world?

Recall the argument of Schleitheim: Though violence is necessary for the state to maintain order and enact justice, our personal faith understanding of how God wants us to relate to one another prevents us from participating in that necessary violence. This reasoning has kept all but a very small number of Mennonites from holding political office — and most of those have not remained in the church because of that decision.[5] What seems less clear is the relation between voting and the actions of officeholders elected by the ballot, despite the prominent rhetoric of "government by the people." The sentiment quoted by John Roth in *Choosing Against War* seems now to be exceedingly rare: "'One of the responsibilities of the president is to serve as commander in chief of the Armed Forces,' one member stated. 'If I could not in good conscience serve in that position, how can I then cast my vote of support for someone else to serve in my place?'"[6] But for those who hold a strong Two Kingdoms view, this argument should be considered much more compelling than it is normally taken to be.

Restating the argument, we have: (1) Violence is necessary to the just function of government. (2) The example and teaching of Jesus Christ call his followers to a life of nonviolent, loving relations with others in all cases. Or, in other words, Christians cannot participate in violence. (3) Therefore, Christians cannot participate in government. The argument as stated is obviously valid, so to avoid the conclusion one would need to either deny a premise or construct a secondary argument distancing voting from actual participation in the violence of government. I am quite certain that the majority of voting Mennonites who might be bothered by the prospect of participation in government vote on the basis of some unarticulated form of the distancing argument; I am also quite convinced that this is an uncomfortably hypocritical stance to take, making those opposed to personal involvement in violence ultimately complicit in the approval of it.

Taking the other approach of denying a premise, those who wish to privilege effectiveness need only deny that Jesus taught an absolutist nonviolence — or alternatively deny that Jesus' teachings are normative. Those who wish to privilege obedience need only deny that violence is necessary to justice in this fallen world. My contention is that the traditional Anabaptist interpretation of God's intent for human relationality as exemplified by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ is exactly correct and is universally normative. I therefore deny the first premise — that violence is necessary.

I have, however, one final argument to consider concerning pacifists voting before I continue on to a closing discussion on the notion of responsibility and necessity. As noted above, voting is a form of negotiated settlement. To use a social-contract concept, those voting have a conflict they want resolved (specifically there are various parties competing for an elected office), and they therefore agree to the binding arbitration of a vote. There is a definite element of promise implicit here: if all parties did not agree to be bound by the decision, there would be no point in voting to determine the resolution. This is why, despite much bitterness and rancor, Al Gore and the Democrats conceded the results of the disputed 2000 elections when the process had run its full course. They did not set up their own government and try to implement their vision for the nation. In the same way, one who participates in an election is bound by the results, including the decisions made by those elected, whether the voter cast a ballot for the winner or the loser. For those of us who then anticipate encountering laws we cannot in conscience follow, such as draft registration or war taxes, fundamental issues of integrity should arise.

Returning finally to the question of necessity: the main support for the notion of effectiveness and indeed for all Just War thought is the supposition that violence is sometimes necessary. But this begs the very important question, Necessary for what? This is not the categorical necessity of the laws of physics; it is rather a hypothetical necessity, which we can formulate something like the following: If (that is the hypothetical) you want to be responsible, violence is sometimes necessary. But "responsible" here must be further drawn out: How are we to define responsibility? And can it be defined in a way that both sides will agree to? Any definition given would most likely contain within it the conclusion that the side defining it would like to reach — either accepting violence as an inevitable part of being responsible or excluding violence from the realm of responsible acts.

I want to stress that I agree with the need for our ethic to be effective and aware of consequences. Those who think violence to be necessary privilege their desire for a certain *end* state of affairs (which might even be a peaceable world). I prefer to privilege the peaceable *means*. Moreover, we are both confronted with the same empirical data in our world experiences and the history we read. Yet, unlike the naive hermeneutics of Luther's *sola scriptura* and the early Anabaptists' "literal biblicism," we know that scripture does not interpret itself, nor is it interpreted in a vacuum. And neither do we understand the world apart from the paradigm we bring to it.

The dominant paradigm for understanding the world today tells us unequivocally that violence is effective. We see it happen all the time; it is all throughout our history. A small, but revolutionary voice says that nonviolence can also be effective, from Gandhi's "satyagraha" to the American civil rights movement.[7] We could go on at length, listing the many ways we can be effective in nonviolent, socially responsible action, from MCC to VORP to Christian Peacemaker Teams, from fair trade marketing to microlending, but it will never be enough to convince the self-identified realist who thinks that there will always be legitimate need for violence as a last resort.

And violence taken is never truly done as the last resort. The problem with the Just War tradition is that the last resort is always interpreted by those who still hold the world's vision of "necessity" and the violence used itself perpetuates the culture of violence, the system that breeds violence. John Roth is correct to point out that there is nothing distinctly Christian about the Just War criteria.[8] Not only did the roots of the Just War formulation come from the pre-Christian, Latin thinker Cicero, but the Chinese Confucian tradition has historically also recognized a need to limit the use of military force to the minimum necessary for order. Moreover, we have real reasons to question the ultimate effectiveness of violence. J. Denny Weaver reminds us that since the effectiveness of violence depends upon winning, it is effective only half of the time, since both sides presumably intend to be effective at something.[9]

Violence may indeed create better results in certain instances, but the violence we think we need to protect innocents is arguably a symptom of injustice in our society or in the world as a whole. Indeed, we must also take into account the damaging injustice caused by maintaining that standing army and the culture of militarism that is not usually included in the calculation for the single, isolated event. We need to ask how effectiveness is being measured,

what other priorities the money spent on military might better serve, and what the long term effects of our governments' various expedient alliances will be. The bandage approach of applying material resources to remedy injustices is itself highly commendable and effective, but systemic injustices require political and structural remedies of the sort that historically Mennonites have not publicly advocated.

Our Two Kingdom ethics obstructs us from articulating to the rest of the world an alternative vision for living, and we no longer fulfill the role of living that vision in separate communities of withdrawal. If our interpretation of Jesus is correct (both who he was and what he meant), then his ethic is normative for all humanity, not just for those who choose our interpretation. If we take seriously the example of Jesus, the way to catalyze the world's paradigm shift is to do as Jesus did: to teach repentance, to embody humility, to live love for our neighbor, to speak truth to power, and to overturn temple moneychangers' tables where necessary. We fail as followers of Jesus unless we articulate an alternative vision for human relations that we can both live out in justice and speak in the halls of power.

Notes

[1] Sept. 30, 2002: 19.

[2] *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, trans. and ed. by John H. Yoder (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), 39-40.

[3] Leo Driedger and Donald Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 236. I have omitted the correlation number from the quotation.

[4] J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder, *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later: A Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1975).

[5] Driedger and Kraybill, 191.

[6] *Choosing Against War: A Christian View* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2002), 191.

[7] See for example, Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

[8] Roth, *Choosing Against War*, 49.

[9] "Responding to September 11-October 7 and January 29: Which Religion Shall We Follow?" *Conrad Grebel Review* 20.2 (2002): 92-93. Weaver here makes an excellent case against the effectiveness of the world's realism.

Michael D. Driedger. *Obedient Heretics: Mennonite Identities in Lutheran Hamburg and Altona during the Confessional Age*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.

Michael Driedger's work concentrates on Mennonites in the Hamburg-Altona region of Germany during the second half of the seventeenth century. These Mennonites had become "ethno-confessional," consisting "almost entirely" of people born into the "Flemish" Mennonite community of Hamburg-Altona. Since Hamburg was officially Lutheran, Mennonites were barred from participation in its political life and forbidden to build churches. A more tolerant attitude prevailed in the adjacent Danish enclave of Altona. Although here, too, religious non-conformity meant a "precarious legal existence," the economic contribution of Mennonites was welcome and they were permitted to meet for worship in Altona. Some entered the lucrative whaling market and prospered, controlling for a time 50 per cent of its proceeds. In 1675 the first church was built in Altona. The cemetery which followed suggested a new permanency and, according to Driedger, set a new benchmark in the "institutional history" of the Altona congregation, which by the late seventeenth century claimed a membership of 250 baptized adults. Congregational governance permitted all baptized males to participate in the election of the leadership. Ordained elders performed marriages and baptisms, and presided during the Lord's Supper.

The book's second chapter delves into the mid-seventeenth century Dompelaar schism. Seventeen members left the Altona congregation, insisting that baptism should be by immersion, and that the Lord's Supper be held in the evening with unleavened bread and only after a foot washing ceremony. While attempts to resolve the dispute failed, immersionists eventually underwent a metamorphosis into non-denominational pietists and dissolved.

The third chapter deals with the "confessionalist strategy" of Altona's church leaders caught in the "war of the lambs" between Zonists and Lambists. The Zonists advocated a stricter confessionalism and had Thielemann Jansz van Braght, compiler of the *Martyrs Mirror*, on their side. In addition to the Apostolic Creed, van Braght included three confessions approved at the Synod of Leiden, chaired by him, in the *Martyrs Mirror*. While van Braght insisted on confessional orthodoxy, the eloquent representative of the Lambists, Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan, sought to retain a less dogmatic ethical piety. The Altona church was drawn into the Zonist confessionalist network, thanks in part to

its influential preacher, Geeritt Roosen. Nevertheless, Abrahamsz was permitted to preach in the Altona congregation. Driedger implies that confessionalism constituted a qualified accommodation to mainstream trends while permitting the preservation of unique Mennonite identities; hence the numerous Mennonite confessions during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Chapter 4 initiates readers into the growing historiography of confessionalism which Driedger has mastered. He describes the paradigmatic shift from "absolutism" to "confessionalism," and how this shift broadens the historical investigation to "the linkages between religion, society, politics, economics and culture" (77). Viewed in this larger context, Mennonites maintained religious nonconformity but became increasingly part of the established order, accepting its legal norms, including their own "subordinate position" (81). In this view, "self-directed . . . preemptive social discipline" exercised by the Mennonites served those interested in obedient subjects and in the maintenance of the existing political-social order.

The last three chapters deal with nonresistance, oath swearing, and mixed marriages. Driedger notes that activist peacemaking would have seemed absurd to early modern Mennonites; "non-resistance" remained the ideal, but it was undermined by economics. Mennonite merchants and ship owners required armed protection against pirates. If they did not outfit their own ships with cannons, they accepted the protection of armed convoys. Some were involved in the arms trade (122). Others, like the Roosens, prominent members of the Altona church, had for generations produced gun powder. Thus economics led to strange bedfellows. The issue of oath swearing, personalized by the story of Hans Plus, illustrates additional difficulties. Plus came to the attention of Hamburg's authorities because he refused to swear the common oath. His case became politicized when the city of Hamburg was accused of harboring Anabaptists. At the trial before Germany's High Court, Hamburg's lawyers argued that Mennonites were not Anabaptists (sic!) and that Plus had sworn an alternative oath, "by the truth of men" (Mannen Wahrheit), in a ritual with all the trappings of a normal oath swearing ceremony. The trial petered out when Plus moved to Russia.

Driedger documents that relations between Hamburg's administrators and Mennonites continued on a relatively cordial trajectory and that increasing tolerance led to increased interaction with outsiders. "Mixed marriages," initially perceived as a threat to the religious-ethnic purity of the community, increased.

Interestingly, the most stubborn resistance against intermarriage came from Mennonite oligarchs primarily interested in protecting family businesses. Leaders who sought to prevent mixed marriages on purely religious grounds faced an increasingly difficult task.

Driedger's study captures the dynamics of Mennonite interaction within the larger context. His study suggests that collective identity and ethno-religious purity are more likely to be maintained under persecution. Readers will find a mine of information in *Obedient Heretics*. Appendices provide the names of preachers and deacons, and offer information on marriages, on conversions (in or out), and on discipline administered. Driedger's book invites discussion and debate. His meticulous scholarship and even-handed interpretation reveal him to be a scholar *par excellence*. Mennonites are fortunate to have such talent and dedication interested in their history.

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Christopher D. Marshall. *Crowned With Glory and Honor: Human Rights in the Biblical Tradition*. Telford, PA: Pandora Press US, 2002.

Christopher Marshall begins this 119-page treatise with a brief review of the origins of the idea of human rights from its emergence in eighteenth century Western secularism until its flowering in the twentieth century. Marshall has two abiding interests: (1) to find the ideology that undergirds human rights; (2) to promote an understanding of human rights grounded in community and paired with responsibility.

Marshall notes that the earliest thinking about human rights was primarily concerned about limiting the rights of oppressive governments. Then theorists formulated ideas that focused on positive goods such as a living wage. Later additions included issues related to economic and ecological justice. As rights thinking evolved in the West side-by-side with individualism, much attention began to focus on individual rights. This is problematic for cultures that are community and family oriented. In their view, some ideas about human rights undermine their value systems.

The author believes that the ideological base for human rights is found in the Bible. Human rights ideology, he argues, is grounded in a theology that

affirms human beings as created in the image of God. He points to the first article of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which "states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (46). He insists that such a belief is not compatible with religions "that believe human existence is determined by the karma accrued in previous lives, so that people are *not* born equal in dignity, rights and freedom" (46). Therefore, he concludes that Article 1 reflects an idea that is specifically Christian (and Jewish).

Marshall identifies six themes that set the theological foundation for human rights: Creation, Cultural Mandate, Covenant, Christ, Church, and Consummation (54-115). Humans are created in the image of God as relational beings. They have worth and also responsibilities because they are the representatives of God on earth. Christians have an obligation to care for the environment (ecological rights), not just for the sake of future generations but also because it is God's creation. Noting that the Apostle Paul was more interested in inner freedom than outer freedom, the author suggests that Christians should, from time to time, voluntarily accept a limitation of their human freedom for the sake of a greater good.

Marshall frequently uses the phrase "right to life," which currently has the very specific meaning of opposition to abortion. However, he uses it differently in much of the book to oppose capital punishment and mutilation, for example (74-75). At the end of chapter 7, he writes that it is essentially a question of "the rights of the woman versus the rights of the unborn child" (106). He concludes, "An ethos of duty would recast the debate in terms of the relative responsibilities of the parents to the unborn child and the wider community to the parents and the child" (106). The reader is left with the feeling that the "right to life" language was used as a subliminal code to prepare for the punch line, which is opposition to abortion.

Following Paul, Marshall implies that slaves and women living in patriarchal and slave-holding cultures can submit to the oppressive structures of their society, knowing inside that they are free and equal before God (100, 96). While this may be a coping mechanism adopted by some, no one should find it acceptable to be free and equal only on the inside. Marshall fears that calling on governments to enforce human rights will lead to "a new kind of totalitarianism . . . . It also permits governments to infringe virtually any right in the name of supporting other rights . . . ." (105). He is also uncomfortable with secular notions of human rights. He writes "the biblical emphasis on duty and

obligation should cause us to question the wisdom of casting so many of the issues of modern social life solely in terms of rights. Rights and responsibilities are complementary and indivisible in the biblical tradition . . . ." (117).

Marshall is right to balance notions of human rights with those of obligation, in stressing the need to set rights in the context of community, and in unearthing the foundation of human rights in Western religion and specifically, I would argue, in Jewish as well as Christian theology. (Marshall does not give enough credit to the earlier Jewish traditions from which Christianity developed.) This provocative and informative study is particularly well suited to college courses in ethics or Bible, or to adult Bible study groups.

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Paul A. Bramadat. *The Church on the World's Turf: An Evangelical Christian Group at a Secular University*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Mennonites and others who attended a Christian college affiliated with a larger secular university will find a way of understanding their experiences by reading this enlightening and useful book. Written from a social scientific perspective, *The Church on the World's Turf* studies the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at McMaster University, a group of about 200 members (almost exclusively white, seventy percent female) at a large, culturally diverse, secular university of some 14,000 students in Ontario's industrial heartland.

Given the myriad studies on conservative Christian groups in the United States and Canada, it is amazing that this is the first social scientific study of an evangelical student group. The majority of such studies employ the "church-as-fortress" metaphor. According to this model, conservative Christian groups or institutions serve as a fortress against liberalism and modernity, with their individualism, materialism, and loose sexual morality.

While Bramadat accepts that the ICVF operates as a fortress against secularism for these students in some cases, he balances this idea with the metaphor of IVCF as bridge. He argues that the Fellowship allows students to reach past their smaller, denominational identity to other Christians and to their secular counterparts, and provides a means to negotiate with the secular university. So, for example, students learn not to interrupt biology classes on

evolution with their ideas on creationism. Instead, they treat the theory of evolution as "one theory among many," learn it, describe it on tests and papers, but distance themselves from it intellectually and psychologically. On the social side, they participate in student activities and do not segregate themselves. However, they refuse to participate in the "sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll" culture that dominates much of student life. They use the ICVF to facilitate contact with other students on their own terms (at least as much as possible). Bramadat emphasizes the freedom and creativity behind these negotiated contracts and the myriad ways that individual students and the ICVF work out their relationships with others.

Anyone who has attended a Christian college at a secular university could easily apply this model to their own experience. When I attended St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto, my friends and I were very much open to what the secular university had to offer. Still, St. Mike's provided a space where we were allowed to nourish and celebrate an alternate worldview with its unique values, practices, and beliefs.

What issues separate IVCF students from their secular counterparts? Some are obvious. Christians attend a university in which the dominant culture disputes or dismisses some of their most important truth-claims. For example, one cannot claim the existence of God as a "fact" in a secular university in the way one can at a Bible college or church school. But in formal subjects, most students do not feel that their beliefs are challenged. It is usually only in classes where topics such as evolutionary biology, sexual and social ethics, and philosophy are discussed that any conflict is felt. Bramadat shows how students negotiate that tension in a variety of ways. His students report that they are not alienated so much from the curriculum as from the youth culture as it is expressed in student life. Sexual promiscuity, swearing, and parties marked by heavy drinking are all features of life on campus, especially in residence. Conservative evangelicals establish a parallel social network through ICVF, for example, organizing social events without alcohol.

While some tensions are resolved rather easily, others are more difficult. For example, conservative Christians steadfastly maintain a "different but equal" stance on woman's rights. Men are to hold the leadership positions in society, church, and the family. Given that seven of ten IVCF members are women, how do they negotiate between their traditional beliefs about the role of women and the challenges to those beliefs posed by liberal individualism

and feminism? Bramadat argues that, through IVCF, women have developed complex, innovative, and empowering strategies that allow them to remain loyal to evangelicalism and, in their words, 'stretched' by the liberal educational institutions that more and more of them are deciding to attend" (101).

The strength of this book is its "postmodern" ethnographic approach. Bramadat takes on the role of participant/observer and befriends his subjects, listening to them patiently, interviewing them endlessly, questioning them gently, and noting their responses responsibly. Through this method of non-judgmental and patient observation, Bramadat can learn how the IVCF functions for these students without rushing to the conclusions of deprivation or social control theory.

Bramadat's tolerant and patient style is challenged by his subjects' sometimes exclusivist claims and chauvinistic attitudes. For example, many IVCF members believe that adherents of the world religions are mistaken or, worse, misled by Satan. Even other Christians are dismissed because they do not use the special vocabulary of the conservative evangelicals, that is, they don't have a "personal relationship" with Jesus as their "Lord and Savior." So Roman Catholics, encountered in great numbers during an IVCF mission to Lithuania, are not Christians. While Bramadat finds some of their attempts to convert him condescending, he is also moved by their genuine concern for his spiritual welfare. Still, he criticizes their judgment on world religions as well as their ignorance of fundamental facts about life in Lithuania. One wonders if Bramadat could not have applied this humanistic critique to other elements of conservative Christian belief. Is evangelical Christianity compatible with the freedom and dignity of women willed by God? Christian feminists will wonder why the author does not pursue this question more aggressively. Moreover, Bramadat fails to mention, never mind critique, conservative Christian attitudes to alternative sexual orientations. Surely this is an issue that separates conservative Christian students from their peers and one that would be open to his humanistic criticisms.

The Church on the World's Turf would make an excellent text in a "Religion in Canada" or sociology of religion course. Administrators and supporters of religious colleges will also learn much about themselves, their institutions, and their students from this interesting, accessible study.

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