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Insights from the Parables of Jesus

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CORRECTIONS (SPRING 2013 ISSUE)

The correct wording of the last stanza of “Goya” by Patrick Friesen (page 173) is as follows:

after dark housebound days
there will never again
be anything to roll
him over in his grave

In “Notes in Lieu of a Manifesto on Anabaptist Theopoetics” by Jeff Gundy, credits for quoted material should read as follows: For Footnote 7: “The Thunder, Perfect Mind” [14 lines] from the NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY IN ENGLISH, 3RD, COMPLETELY REVISED EDITION by JAMES M. ROBINSON, GENERAL EDITOR. Copyright © 1978, 1988 by E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers. For Footnote 8: “Just as the winged energy of delight” from SELECTED POEMS OF RAINER MARIA RILKE, A TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN AND COMMENTARY by ROBERT BLY. Copyright © 1981 by Robert Bly. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

Foreword

In this issue, which completes CGR's thirtieth anniversary celebration, we present the 2013 Bechtel Lectures on the theme "Violence, Victimhood, and Recovery: Insights from the Parables of Jesus" by Christopher D. Marshall, articles by David C. Cramer on Mennonite systematic theology and by Ry O. Siggelkow on Christian pacifism "after Hauerwas," and book reviews of an array of noteworthy recent releases.

At the end of the issue are notices of several calls for papers. Two of the calls seek submissions to this journal on "Revisiting Mennonite Peace Theology" and on "Economics in Anabaptist Perspective."

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Presenting the Bechtel lectures is one of the CGR traditions that we look forward to maintaining in the future, together with presenting the Eby lectures, recent scholarship, and reviews of significant publications. As we move into our fourth decade, we seek to uphold and extend CGR's mandate to offer thoughtful, sustained discussion of spirituality, ethics, theology and culture from a broadly-based Mennonite perspective.

We remind readers that we welcome at any time submissions of articles or reflections in keeping with CGR's mandate. We also seek brief responses to previously published articles.

Jeremy M. Bergen, Editor

Stephen A. Jones, Managing Editor

THE 2013 BECHTEL LECTURES
**Violence, Victimhood, and Recovery:
Insights from the Parables of Jesus**

LECTURE ONE
Love's Four Objects and the Pursuit of Peace

Christopher D. Marshall

I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude to Conrad Grebel University College for inviting me to be this year's Bechtel Lecturer. I am genuinely honored by the invitation and delighted to have the chance to return to Canada, where I have made many valued friendships over the years (this is my sixth or seventh visit to this vast land). I am even more delighted to get the chance to visit Conrad Grebel University College, and to include it with the other Mennonite colleges and seminaries in North America with which I have forged strong personal links. There are no such Anabaptist institutions of higher learning in my part of the world, so I always find it both deeply rewarding, and oddly reassuring, when visiting North America to spend time in conversation and fellowship with like-minded Mennonite friends and colleagues here.

Two years ago my wife Margaret and I spent a week in Elkhart, Indiana, on our way home to New Zealand after visiting our son and daughter-in-law in New York. Our family had spent seven months at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart some 20 years earlier, and it was the first time Margaret and I had been back there together. It was an amazing week. We were received with such love and warmth and joy by so many people that Margaret likened it to being in heaven! It was a powerful reminder—not that we needed any reminding—of how deeply formed and how greatly blessed we have been over the past 30 years, not simply by the Anabaptist theological tradition in some abstract sense but by concrete friendships with many wonderful Mennonite Christian people. We are so grateful for all we have received from the Anabaptist-Mennonite

family of faith, to which many of you here this evening also belong.

Among the greatest gifts we have received, unsurprisingly, has been an appreciation of the centrality of peacemaking and nonviolence to Christian discipleship. We have learned that to follow Christ is to own the “things that make for peace” (Luke 19:42, cf. Zech. 8:16), and that to belong to the church is to belong to a community of peacemakers: a people reconciled to God and to one another in Christ, and entrusted by him with the “ministry of reconciliation” to the world (2 Cor. 5:18). What that vocation means in practice will vary from place to place and age to age. Every setting has its own distinctive challenges.

In our own time and place, here in the West at the beginning of the third millennium, it means among other things having to wrestle with the deadly reality of global terrorism and massive state-led military responses to it, and with learning how to live together peacefully in a multi-faith, pluralist, globalized world. The sheer complexity of these challenges was thrown into sharpest relief by the dreadful events of September 11, 2001, events that dramatically altered world history. Historical change is of course a perpetually occurring phenomenon, and there is nothing new about our human capacity for cruelty and bloodshed. But there remains a genuine sense in which history *did* change significantly on that sultry summer morning in New York City when fully laden passenger planes were flown into the Twin Towers (and the Pentagon) and some 3,000 innocent people perished. Recalling that awful day, one British journalist writes: “I was in Brussels when Armageddon arrived.”¹

As well as plunging America and her allies into an era of seemingly endless war, the religious sensibilities of the hijackers and their handlers, and those of many in America who have prosecuted the so-called “Global War on Terror,” have heightened anxieties in the public mind about the potential—even the predisposition—of religious piety to promulgate and perpetrate acts of unspeakable horror and violence. It has also raised questions about the relationship between the world’s great faith traditions, and whether it is ever possible for them to “dwell together in unity,” in the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 133:1).

¹ Martin Fletcher, “Sifting Through the 9/11 Apocalypse,” *Dominion Post*, September 7, 2011: B5.

It is now a commonplace to hear religion generically excoriated—especially by the so-called “New Atheists”—as a singular cause of many of the world’s most entrenched hatreds and conflicts. It is much less common but surely much more important to hear public discussion about how the unique power of religious belief and devotion—which is, after all, an ineradicable part of human existence and is never simply going to disappear of its own accord—can be harnessed in the cause of peace, justice, and reconciliation. (It is here that the Anabaptist-Mennonite experience has so much to teach the wider church and indeed the wider world).

A Common Word

There are some signs of hope, however. In October 2007, for example, 138 Muslim leaders in America published an open letter in the *New York Times* addressed to their Christian counterparts and entitled “A Common Word Between Us and You.” The letter proposed that, while Islam and Christianity are obviously different religions, the commandments to love God and love one’s neighbor are a crucial area of agreement between the Qur’an, the Torah, and the New Testament. The unity of God, and a commitment to love this God and to love one’s neighbor as oneself forms the “common ground,” they suggested, on which Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are founded, and thus furnishes a constructive basis for forging interreligious understanding and peacemaking. The following month an appreciative response, crafted by Christian theologians at Yale University, was published in the *Times* under the signatures of over 300 prominent Christian leaders. In July 2008, 150 scholars and spiritual leaders from both religious communities gathered at Yale to discuss and debate both statements. The proceedings of their conference were published in 2010 in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*,² and there have been further follow-up events as well.

Meanwhile, the Common Word initiative has grown into what is possibly the world’s most successful interfaith enterprise ever. It has achieved unprecedented global acceptance, including endorsement by the heads of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran communions,

² Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad and Melissa Yarrington, eds., *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

by over 460 Islamic organizations, and by some Jewish authorities. The goodwill engendered by the venture has also begun to trickle down to a congregational level. According to Christian theologian Miroslav Volf, the Common Word project has the potential to become an historic watershed in redefining relations between the world's two numerically largest faiths.

Distinctive Frameworks

Even if all three Abrahamic religions share a common emphasis on love of God and neighbor, differences of definition remain. Muslims, Christians, and Jews will likely mean somewhat different things by the words “love,” “God,” and “neighbor” in the commandments, and there will be differences *within* each tradition as well. All may agree on the necessity of worshiping the one true God, but will disagree on the nature and attributes of this God.

For Christians, for instance, a proper understanding of the nature of God is inextricably connected with the doctrines of Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Trinity, all of which Muslims deny. For many Muslims (and indeed many Jews), these doctrines serve to imperil or impair or even contradict God's absolute Unity, which lies at the basis of the great commandment. But this of course is *not* how Christians perceive it. For Christians, there is still only *one* God—one numerically identical divine essence—but one shared by *three* modes of subsistence, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This tri-unity of God, moreover, is not some secondary or expendable detail; it is integral to appreciating what it means to love God and love neighbor. For, in Christian understanding, love derives from God's very own being, so that how we understand “God” will shape how we understand “love.” As 1 John famously puts it, “God is love” (4:16), and “We should love one another because everyone who loves is born of God and knows God . . . for God is love” (4:7-8).

To say that “God is love” and that to experience love is to “know God” is to say more than God *has* love, *feels* love, or *expresses* love for his creatures. It is to say that love is an essential attribute of God's personal being. Now love, of its intrinsic nature, is a relational reality. It requires an object toward whom it is directed and from whom, in its purest form, it receives love in return. According to Christian Trinitarian confession, this relational give-and-take of love is present within the very life of God. God is

an incomparable and unique Unity, to be sure, but a unity that is internally differentiated, with reciprocating love flowing endlessly between the three persons of the triune Godhead.

This love also flows outward in historical acts of creation. But it manifests itself supremely, Christians believe, in the Incarnation of Christ—by which and through whom God graciously receives human nature into the divine experience. And the ultimate demonstration of God's love in all its unconditional, indiscriminate, and sacrificial perfection is Christ's atoning death and resurrection for the sake of our redemption. It is the self-giving life and death of Christ that serves as the supreme paradigm for what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

So, then, the Christian narrative of salvation—with its undergirding apprehension of God's tri-unity (or what has been called Christianity's "complex monotheism")—offers a distinctive framework for understanding the meaning and depth of the love we are summoned to show in the great commandments. Muslim and Jewish traditions will similarly have their own distinctive insights into these commandments while demurring from certain features of Christian understanding. The challenge for all three communities is to develop not simply a passive toleration of one another's idiosyncratic views but a positive appreciation of what each brings to the table.

Such mutual appreciation will most readily arise from an open-hearted, sympathetic encounter between the most sincere believers of each tradition. Such interfaith engagement on the part of the most deeply committed affords the possibility of each encountering in the religion of the "other" aspects of what is good, true, and holy. And when dedicated believers of one tradition experience in the adherents of another tradition facets of truth, beauty, goodness, and holiness that they cannot deny, things necessarily change. When one finds *God* disclosed in one's neighbor and even, perchance, in those hitherto thought to be strangers or infidels or apostates or enemies, in that discovery lies the prospect of lasting peace—a peace grounded in something far more profound than passive toleration and far more enduring than anything secular politics can produce.

With this background in mind, let me now turn to one of the two places in the gospel tradition where we find the "Common Word" of love

for God and love of neighbor explicitly stated, expressly endorsed by Jesus, and dramatically illustrated in a powerful parable. The passage is Luke 10:25-37—a passage I will focus on in both these Bechtel lectures and drawing on my recent book, *Compassionate Justice*.³ In this first lecture I will concentrate on the interchange between Jesus and a Jewish questioner about the meaning of the greatest commandment in the law, which the parable serves to illustrate, and in the second lecture on what the parable teaches about violence, victimhood, and recovery.

What Must I Do?

Luke's narrative opens with a certain "lawyer" asking Jesus what he must do "to inherit eternal life." The lawyer would have been a Torah scholar, an expert in the texts and traditions of first-century Jewish law and custom. The fact that he stood up to ask his question and salutes Jesus courteously as a "teacher" suggests he has been seated among those whom Jesus has just been instructing, thereby recognizing Jesus' authority as a rabbi.

The question he asks was probably a commonplace in religious discussion of his time, and it is likely that Jesus was well known for discoursing on it (cf. 18:30; Mark 10:30; Matt. 19:29; 25:46). As a specialist in the Torah the lawyer would have naturally assumed the answer to his question resided in the Torah. But where? How was the meaning of God's law to be rightly understood and obeyed? He was presumably hoping to elicit from Jesus a summary of the Torah's most fundamental or ineluctable requirements, perhaps captured in a single paradigmatic commandment, the fulfilment of which would comprehend all other precepts in the law and thus guarantee eternal life.

Jesus responds to his question with a counter-question inviting the lawyer to nail his own colors to the mast: "What is written in the law?" he asks. "What do you read there?" (v. 26). This was a standard rabbinic formula for inviting someone to recite or expound the relevant Scripture. What is most revealing at this point of the interchange is the extent of common

³ Christopher D. Marshall, *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012). I have kept bibliographical citations to a minimum in these lectures because they are available in this book.

ground between Jesus and his interlocutor. There is agreement that access to the future world is a valid concern and should not be taken for granted; that the requirements of entry are disclosed in the Torah; and that performance of the Torah is not only desirable and feasible, it is absolutely essential. There is no trace of anxiety, on either side, about the dangers of legalism or self-righteousness or earning one's own salvation through accumulating merit. The key issue is not *whether* Torah observance is necessary for salvation, but *how* the Torah is to be construed and obeyed.

In response to Jesus' question, the lawyer brings together two widely separated commandments in the Torah: the *Shema* from Deut. 6:4-5, which faithful Israelites were expected to recite twice a day, and the formulation of the Golden Rule in Lev. 19:18.

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind [cf. Deut. 6:5]; and your neighbor as yourself [cf. Lev. 19:18]."

Here, then, we have the "Common Word" text. There are three striking features about this interchange. First, it is the Jewish lawyer, not Jesus, who nominates the love commandments as the law's center of gravity; second, in doing so, he conflates two distinct commandments into a single unitary obligation; and third, he construes this obligation to be principally a matter of volitional obedience rather than emotional experience. Let me expand on each of these observations.

The question of originality

The first thing to note is that it is the lawyer who offers the twin love commandments as the heart and goal of the law's teaching and the key to eternal life. This insight is not depicted as a hermeneutical innovation on the part of Jesus, though Christians have often regarded it as such. It comes instead from the cross-examining and somewhat hostile Jewish lawyer. Some commentators propose that he is simply echoing or reflecting back what he had first learned from Jesus' teaching. That could be so, but there is absolutely no hint of it in the text. On the contrary, Jesus expressly asks him to draw on his own existing legal knowledge to answer the question: "What do *you* read there?" The foundational importance of the love commands, in

other words, is another area of commonality between Jesus and the Jewish scholar.

This may come as a surprise to many Christians, who usually credit Jesus with this original insight. Indeed, enormous scholarly effort has been expended trying to prove that Jesus' teaching on the double love commandments was innovative or unique. To be fair, the evidence is complex and difficult to assess, and there are certainly distinctive features about Jesus' teaching on the subject in the Gospels. But none of the biblical accounts ever suggests that Jesus was alone in recognizing the pre-eminence of the twin love commandments. Certainly Luke has absolutely nothing invested in implying that Jesus' perspective was in any way novel or original. He even places the crucial confession on the lips of an antagonistic legal opponent, who was out to "trap" Jesus in his words. As far as Luke and indeed all the Gospel writers are concerned, this truly was a "common word" shared not only by Jesus and his supporters but also by his critics and opponents.

The conflation of the twin commands

This leads to the second observation on the episode. In answering Jesus' question, the lawyer conflates two distinct commandments into a single unit without differentiation, governed by a single verb: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind . . . and your neighbor as yourself."

In the other parallel story in the Gospel tradition involving the love commandments (Mark 12/Matthew 22), the situation is different. There, love for God is identified as the "first" and "greatest" commandment, and love of neighbor as "the second" commandment, though it is "like" the first in character (Mark 12:28-31; Matt. 22:38-39). This hierarchical enumeration keeps the two commandments quite distinct. Love for God is given absolute primacy; love for neighbor comes second in importance, though it remains inseparably linked with the first. But this enumeration does not occur in Luke's episode. Here the lawyer blends the two commandments into a single obligation, controlled by a single verb. Moreover, Jesus endorses this amalgamation: "You have given the right answer," he says. "Do *this* (not, do *these*), and you will live." The two commandments are not simply juxtaposed; they are effectively combined.

What are we to infer from this? The inference seems to be that love for God includes and enables love of neighbor, while love of neighbor expresses and requires love for God. This does not mean the two objects are considered identical or interchangeable, with “God” and “neighbor” being different words for the same reality. There are still two objects—God and neighbor—and God is still mentioned first. But there is only *one* love. The key point is this: *There can be no love for God without love for neighbor, and no love for neighbor that does not involve pleasing or obeying God.* To love God with all of one’s heart and mind and soul and strength—the totality of one’s physical, moral, intellectual, and emotional capacities—as the commandment enjoins—*requires* loving one’s neighbor as well, and loving one’s neighbor is an *integral* part of one’s total response to God. God cannot be loved in isolation, but only in and through loving other people. This, again, is something on which Jesus and the Jewish lawyer are in total agreement. Love for God and love of neighbor are inseparable obligations. Without love for neighbor, it is impossible to love or please God.

Love as ethical obligation

This brings us to the third observation. The “love” that Scripture speaks of in all this is primarily a volitional and moral commitment, not an emotional experience. After all, if God *commands* us to love, then love must be first and foremost a matter of formal obedience. It is not a case of having warm, fuzzy feelings towards others—which cannot be ordered into existence anyway—but rather a case of *willing* and *doing* what is necessary to secure others’ welfare.

Once more, this is something Jesus and the lawyer agree on. The lawyer asked, “What must I *do* to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responds by prompting him to recite the love commandments and then says, “*Do* this and you shall live.” Love is something to be done, not something to be felt. Love for God is to be “done” by obeying God’s will. Love for neighbor is to be “done” by acting in the neighbor’s best interests. Both parties concur on this. But, for the first time in our story, a crack begins to open up between them on two other consequential matters—on how far love should go on behalf of its object and on how inclusive love’s object should be. On these two matters, Jesus appears to set a new high watermark.

Recall that Jesus' interrogator is a lawyer, and a very good lawyer at that. Like all lawyers he wants to nail down his terms; and as a good lawyer he pays very careful attention to the actual wording and context of the relevant legislation. The law stipulates that he must love his neighbor as himself, and Jesus confirms that by doing so he will gain eternal life. "But," the lawyer inquires, "Who precisely is my neighbor?" This seems to be a perfectly reasonable question, and one that close attention to the commandment's original setting and intent can easily answer. It is crystal clear in Leviticus 19 that "neighbour" refers to fellow members of the covenant community of Israel. It designates not just those living in close physical proximity to oneself but those sharing in the same full covenantal status as oneself. To "love one's neighbor" in Leviticus 19 does not mean to act benevolently towards all human beings in general; rather it means to uphold and protect the rights, dignity, and status of all those within the covenant community. In short, the "neighbor" of the original commandment is a fellow Israelite.

For Jesus, however, the key issue in the interpretation of Lev. 19:18 is not the definition of "neighbor" but the meaning of "love." Neighbors, according to Jesus, are not created by accident of birth, nationality, religion, or law; they are discovered through love. When love is present and active, the identification of neighbors takes care of itself. According to the rule of love, we stand in neighborly relationship to every person we encounter, irrespective of any secondary status that law, religion, culture, ethnicity, nationality, or creed might or might not confer upon them.

It is here that Jesus differs from the lawyer. Both accept that love of neighbor sums up the Torah and is essential for eternal life. But whereas the lawyer thinks the critical issue is the scope of the term "neighbor," Jesus considers it to be the scope of the term "love." The lawyer reduces love to its legal minimum by restricting the category of neighbor to fellow members of his own religious community. Jesus, however, maximizes the category because he refuses to limit the demands of love. Neighbors are not chosen or created by religion or nationality; they are found and cultivated through human encounter. Moreover, because love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God, and because the latter is meant to engage the entire personality in undivided commitment, there can be no exceptions to love's attentiveness and no limits to what love requires.

But how does Jesus convey his new, radically extensive understanding of neighbor love? How does he seek to persuade the lawyer of its radical implications? Not by means of abstract philosophical reflection or by exegetical-linguistic debate, but by telling a story—the so-called parable of the Good Samaritan—an imaginary little tale that operates on multiple levels and teaches many lessons. In my book *Compassionate Justice*, I probe the relevance of this parable (and the parable of the Prodigal Son) for legal theory in general and restorative justice in particular. In the second Bechtel lecture, I will illustrate how I do this with respect to the areas of victimization and recovery. In what remains of this lecture, however, I want to comment on the parable's relevance to peacemaking. For arguably the most radical and disconcerting feature of this remarkable tale is the way it elides the boundary between neighbor-love and enemy-love.

A Parable of Enemy Love

The parable tells of a man who is brutally assaulted on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho and is left for dead on the side of the road. Two passing temple officials notice the unconscious man in the ditch. But instead of stopping to help him, they cross to the other side of the road and carry on their way. Next a travelling Samaritan merchant chances upon the victim. He is “moved with compassion” at what he sees. He bandages the victim's wounds, lifts him onto his own donkey, and transports him to a nearby inn, where he takes care of him overnight. The following day the Samaritan must resume his journey, but not before paying the innkeeper in advance to continue nursing the injured man back to health, and promising to reimburse him for any other expenses he might incur. Jesus concludes the story by inviting the lawyer to nominate which of the three characters in the episode acted like a true neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers, and then enjoins the lawyer to “go and do likewise.”

Jesus' first audience would have been taken aback at the appearance of a Samaritan in the story. After the priest and the Levite, they would have naturally expected the third character to be an Israelite layman, since the threefold division of “priests, Levites and all the children of Israel” was a standard way of summarizing the diversity of the nation. Yet not only does Jesus use a Samaritan in place of an Israelite, he portrays him as responding

in a way that puts the religious leaders of Israel to shame.

The jarring nature of this reversal of roles cannot be emphasized too strongly. All the literary and historical evidence suggests that relations between Jews and Samaritans in the first century were implacably hostile. Both groups viewed the other in the darkest of terms, and tensions between the two communities were widespread, deep-seated, and sometimes viciously violent. Only by appreciating the full extent of this culture of mutual loathing can we begin to comprehend the far-reaching ramifications of Jesus' casting of a Samaritan as the savior of the Jewish stranger on the roadside.

Jesus uses the parable, we have seen, to expound the commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). But his exposition is stunningly subversive. Had he simply wanted to emphasize the need to show charity towards those in distress, any three individuals would have sufficed as actors in the drama, as long as the third one did the right thing. Had he only wanted only to take a pot shot at priestly myopia or clerical self-centeredness, the third person down the road could have been an Israelite layperson who showed them up by way of contrast. And had he only wanted to encourage moral concern for outsiders and opponents, he could have portrayed the victim as a Samaritan and his rescuer as a faithful Jew. But by deliberately *reversing* these roles—by portraying a despised enemy as the vehicle of compassionate, restorative love—Jesus effectively achieves two more radical outcomes: he expands the meaning of neighbor love to include enemy love, and he nullifies the identification of religious opponents with the enemies of God or the instruments of Satan.

Both moves were phenomenally daring. With few exceptions it was taken for granted in antiquity that one should love one's friends and harm one's enemies (cf. Matt. 5:43). Jesus, by startling contrast, deemed love of friends to be ethically unremarkable (Luke 6:32-34; Matt. 5:46-47), while commending love for one's enemies as the true sign of fidelity to God, "for God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked" (Luke 6:27-31, 35-36; Matt. 5:44-45). This was shocking enough. But what is doubly shocking in the parable is that the one who displays such God-honoring enemy love was himself deemed by Jesus' hearers to be an enemy of God, a "foreigner" (Luke 17:18), who knew not the God of Israel he falsely claimed to worship (cf. John 4:22), and upon whom divine judgment could legitimately be called down (Luke 9:51-55).

Jesus could have enrolled a Samaritan as the victim and had a Jewish benefactor stop to render him assistance. That would have exemplified love for enemy well enough. But it would not have deconstructed the pervasive stereotyping of other religious groups as inherently evil adversaries, and could even have reinforced his audience's sense of moral superiority towards them. To reverse the roles of hero and villain was an incredibly audacious thing to do. Kenneth Bailey explains how, even after living in the Middle East for over 20 years, he never had the courage to tell Palestinians a story about a noble Israeli, or Armenians a tale about a noble Turk.

Only one who has lived as a part of a community with a bitterly hated traditional enemy can understand fully the courage of Jesus in making the despised Samaritan appear as morally superior to the religious leadership of his audience. Thus Jesus speaks to one of the audience's deepest hatreds and painfully exposes it.⁴

The parable of the Good Samaritan is thus a parable of enemy love and a parable of generous religiosity. It shows how the boundaries dividing people into mutually hostile groups are relativized and destabilized when individuals choose to ascribe absolute priority to love and compassion over all other cultural and religious reservations or inhibitions. Witnessing the desperate need of the dying victim, the Samaritan is so "moved with compassion" that an erstwhile Judean enemy is transformed into a neighbor and treated as such. The Samaritan extends to an anonymous stranger the intimacy of care befitting a close friend or brother, without giving a moment's thought as to his ethnic origins or religious loyalties. It is as if the whole sorry history of hatred between these two rival groups had never existed.

The parable teaches, then, that the familiar, comforting correlation we make between friend and foe with good and evil is deceiving and dangerously unreliable. Religious enemies are capable of doing great good, and compatriots can do real evil, sometimes by doing nothing at all. It also teaches that the most powerful way to overcome such destructive dualisms is by simple acts of kindness and compassion on the part of individuals who

⁴ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Critical Approach to the Parables of Jesus in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 48.

reach across the divisions of fear and loathing that divide hostile communities in order to treat the “other” as brother, the foreigner as friend, the enemy as neighbor, the one who suffers as the object of human compassion.

Love as Compassionate Action

I said earlier that the “love” the biblical commandments speak of is primarily a volitional and activist commitment, not an emotional experience. Commentators frequently belabor this point, with a palpable sense of relief. They note, for example, that only by understanding love in non-emotional terms is it possible to make sense of “loving your enemies.” Love of enemy cannot be a feeling, because enemies by definition are those for whom we do not feel tenderness or affection or warmth. We love our enemies, not by caring deeply for them but by refraining from harming them, hurting them, or killing them, or perhaps by actively helping them.

Now this is true, insofar as it goes. Biblical love is unquestionably an action more than a sentiment, something done more than something felt. But the parable of the Good Samaritan suggests there is more to love of neighbor than benevolent activism. The Samaritan’s extraordinary actions—which are recounted in exquisite detail, as we will see in the next lecture—are the direct result of his being “moved with compassion” at what he saw (v. 33). This verb denotes a stirring in his innards, a gut-wrenching surge of emotion that propelled him into action. The love he displayed was more than a clinical, cold-hearted compliance to the dictates of moral law; it was a passionate, sympathetic sharing in the victim’s personal suffering and isolation. The Samaritan did justice to his legal and moral obligation to love his neighbor as himself by *feeling* compassion *and* by *acting* in accordance.

For Jesus, neighbor-love is more than practical action, more than showing respect for the equal rights and freedoms of others (as it is in contemporary liberal ethics); and certainly more than choosing not to kill someone. It is instead a love patterned after our love for God. Just as love for God cannot be reduced to exterior actions alone but is all-encompassing in its reach—engaging the entire heart, mind, soul, and strength—so love for neighbor cannot be limited to external deeds alone but involves feelings, thoughts, and motivations as well. This is an important consequence of the amalgamation of the two Torah commandments into a single command,

governed by a single verb. It is not uncommon in the Abrahamic traditions to see a deep affinity between one's love for God and the emotional intensity of human love, especially romantic love. This is the common stuff of mysticism and worship. It is less common to reverse the relation and understand love for one's fellow human beings as demanding the same intensity and passion of love that we have for God.

But this is precisely what the parable teaches. The whole-heartedness of the covenant love for God enjoined in the Torah must also be extended to neighbors as well. *Both* God *and* neighbor are to be loved with the whole of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength. In both cases, the love entailed is volitional, rational, practical *and* emotional in character. Such love is commanded, not because it involves actions alone but because it begins with an intentional commitment before it is either an action or an emotion. We must choose to love before we do anything practical, and whether or not we feel anything emotionally. But, having chosen the path of love, actions and feelings will ensue.

The Samaritan acted with such sacrificial dedication to meeting the needs of an erstwhile enemy because he felt compassion for him. He saw him as a fellow human being in life-threatening need. This is only explicable if he had first renounced the dehumanizing stereotype that deems outsiders and religious opponents to be less than fully human or even the embodiments of evil. He must have predetermined that he would show care to all those he directly encountered in his daily life, irrespective of race, class, religion, color, nationality, or creed. He felt compassion because he had already taught himself to put the equal humanity of others ahead of all other considerations. Then, being "moved with compassion" at what he encountered, he engaged all the powers of his personality—his sight, heart, hands, strength, time, possessions, and intelligence—to meet the needs of a collective enemy.

This is the most staggering feature of the parable. The Samaritan's display of love exceeds mere charity; it is unreserved in its passion and commitment. This leaves us, as hearers of the story, with an inescapable question: Whence comes such all-encompassing love for others? Whence comes this intensity and generosity of human love that universalizes "neighbors" and even elides the distinction between neighbors and enemies? It can only come, Christian believers would say, from the Triune God, the

source of all love. It can only come from knowing and understanding the love of God, and experiencing that love in all its limitless depths and boundless grace.

Conclusion

This is perhaps the main take-away lesson of this parable for interreligious peacemaking. If Muslims, Christians, and Jews encourage those within their respective faith traditions truly to love God with all of their hearts, minds, souls, and strength, as their Scriptures all require, *and* to appreciate the extensive, self-giving nature of God's own love, *and* to model their love of neighbor on their love for God and on the love of God itself, then peace must result. "Everyone who loves," 1 John 4 says, "is born of God, and knows God, for God is love." And no one who is truly born of God, or who truly knows God's love, can hate or kill or demonize their enemies in the name of that God.

There is a second take-away lesson for peacemaking as well. The parable recounts a direct encounter between members of two mutually hostile religious communities and the emergence of a relationship between them. The Samaritan did not simply render emergency first aid to the victim at the roadside and then continue on his way. He committed himself to a relationship of enduring care and responsibility for the victim, both in the immediate term and into the future. There is perhaps an important clue here for peacemaking. The deliberate fostering of interpersonal contact between individuals from opposing groups is an extremely powerful though under-appreciated tool for conflict transformation. Arguably the best and only lasting way to initiate change in the attitudes of mutual suspicion and hostility that divide warring groups is by building one-to-one friendships between key individuals from both sides—what Jewish conflict specialist Marc Gopin calls "civilian diplomacy."⁵

Such concrete relationships between individuals from opposite sides of the tracks by their very existence complexify reality and disallow the wholesale demonizing of the other group. Just as the impact of collective violence is ultimately experienced by individual actors, and disseminated

⁵ Marc Gopin, *To Make the Earth Whole: The Art of Civilian Diplomacy in an Age of Religious Militancy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009).

through personal networks by the constant recounting of stories of suffering and injustice, so the impact of individual acts of reconciliation can spread through the relational networks tying communities together, and can gradually accumulate until a tipping-point is reached and society-wide shifts in consciousness occur. As stories of enemies acting out of character as enemies are told and retold, they erode the foundations of prejudice and stereotyping upon which historically entrenched structures of animosity rest, so that peaceful coexistence begins to be conceivable.

Jesus' remarkable parable of the Good Samaritan is one such story of enemies acting out of character as enemies. It is a fictional story, to be sure, but it is still an immensely powerful story for deconstructing the comforting yet ultimately death-dealing distinctions we draw between "us" and "them," "truth" and "falsehood," "friends" and "foreigners," "believers" and "unbelievers," "neighbors" and "enemies." Certainly it is immensely powerful for Christians because of the unique authority of the one who tells it. Yet it is also powerful for those outside the Christian tradition because of its intrinsic moral truthfulness. It is impossible to deny that the Samaritan in the story did the right thing, whereas the other characters did not.

However, the greatest challenge lies not in what the Samaritan did; it lies in closing words of Jesus. "Which of these three," he asks the lawyer, "do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" "The one who showed him mercy," the lawyer replies. Jesus said to him, "Go *you* and do likewise."

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THE 2013 BECHTEL LECTURES
**Violence, Victimhood, and Recovery:
Insights from the Parables of Jesus**

LECTURE TWO
Compassion, Justice, and the Work of Restoration¹

Christopher D. Marshall

On April 4, 1967, the great American civil rights leader, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered a speech to a gathering of an organization called “Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam” at Riverside Church in New York City.² Professing his wholehearted agreement with the aims and work of the organization, King recounted how, over the preceding two years, he had moved to “break the betrayal of my own silences” on the Vietnam war. Many had questioned the wisdom of his doing so, he said, fearing it would detract from his focus on civil rights. But coming out against the war, King retorted, was not only consistent with the ongoing commission to peacemaking implicit in the Nobel Peace Prize he had received in 1964, it was also consistent with his commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ: “To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war.”

King proceeded to deplore the dishonorableness of America’s intentions in Vietnam, and to detail the enormous suffering that three decades of war had inflicted on the people of that blighted peninsula. He called for an end to aerial bombardment, the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, the

¹ This lecture draws on several sections of my new book *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012); reproduced with permission. I have kept bibliographical citations to a minimum in this lecture because they are available in the book.

² Martin Luther King Jr., “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence”: www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm.

opening of negotiations with the Viet Cong, and the setting of a firm date for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country. He also proposed that all young men in America should register as conscientious objectors, and encouraged all ministers of religion to give up their ministerial exemptions from military service and also enrol as conscientious objectors.

But King went further still. True to his trade as a preacher and a public prophet, he asserted that the war was a symptom of a far deeper malady in the American spirit. "If America's soul becomes totally poisoned," he said, "part of the autopsy must read Vietnam." A nation that is prepared to send its poor Negro and white boys to kill and die together in the villages of Southeast Asia, but is unable to seat them together in the same schools, or to house them in the same city blocks, is a nation in spiritual decline. A country that chooses to invest its vast wealth and resources in the demonic destructiveness of militarism, rather than in rehabilitating the poor, is a "society gone mad on war." What America needed, King declared, is "a radical revolution of values," entailing a shift from being a "thing-oriented" society to becoming a "person-oriented" society, and accompanied by a re-ordering of priorities so that the pursuit of peace takes precedence over the pursuit of war. Without such a moral and spiritual revolution, America will never be able to conquer "the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism." He continued with these memorable words:

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth ... and say: "This is not just."
... A true revolution of values will ... say of war: "This way of

settling differences is not just.” This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation’s homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programs of spiritual uplift is approaching spiritual death.

The Vietnam era is over, and many things have changed in American society since then. But King’s searing critique of American militarism and its inextricable relationship with racism and social injustice remains as pertinent today as it did 40 years ago (read “Afghanistan” in place of Vietnam, and it could have been delivered last week).

Three Insights on Christian Social Engagement

King’s speech is also an instructive example of a particular way of approaching Christian social engagement. The speech is fundamentally an anti-war homily, not an analysis of domestic social and political policy. But King refuses to compartmentalize the nature of justice, and moves backwards and forwards between the tragedy of Vietnam and the violence and poverty of America’s ghettos, as two sides of the same coin. He explains that one of the things impelling him to raise his voice against the war was the incongruity of commending nonviolent social change to the desperate, rejected, and angry young men on the streets of America’s cities while the American government modeled a way of solving its problems overseas through employing “massive doses of violence.” King’s style of social commentary is one that exposes the interconnectedness of all spheres of collective life and insists on consistency between what the State expects of its citizens and how the State itself acts.

A second noteworthy feature of King’s approach is that he does not begin with some speculative theory of justice, or a pre-cast list of ethical principles or human rights, that are then applied to social reality in order to determine an appropriate course of action. Instead King begins on the one hand with a personal confession of his complicity in the problems he is describing, and on the other hand with an account, again grounded in

vivid personal experience, of concrete situations of poverty, violence, racism, and injustice both at home and abroad. What justice requires, he assumes, cannot be discerned in the abstract from the safe distance of a policy analyst, academic specialist, or media commentator; it can only be discovered by looking squarely at the actual, embodied suffering of the victims of oppression and questioning the structural arrangements that perpetuate their suffering.

A third feature of King's approach is his appeal to religious or spiritual resources to envision change. He speaks of his own commitment to Jesus Christ and emphasizes the universal brotherhood, and, indeed, the divine sonship of all people under God's fatherhood. Along with quotations from President Kennedy, Arnold Toynbee, and several black poets, King cites two biblical texts verbatim (Isa. 40:4/Luke 3:5; 1 John 4:7), and alludes to a third, the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). It is this third allusion that is most interesting, and most frequently quoted by Christian social activists. King's striking words make the point that while doing works of compassion is an important part of the Christian calling, by itself it is not enough. It must be accompanied by transformation of the social structures that generate poverty and violence in the first place—by the re-paving of the Jericho road.

King's point—that there is more to Christian mission than patching up the victims of structural injustice—is absolutely correct. As well as being good Samaritans, we have to ask about *why* the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is so damned dangerous in the first place! But there is still a huge amount for us to learn about the nature of justice and the task of Christian social engagement by attending closely to the actions of the Good Samaritan himself. This is what I want to do in the remainder of this second Bechtel lecture.

A Parable of Enormous Cultural Influence

Of all the stories Jesus told, none has been absorbed more deeply into the moral and legal traditions of Western civilization than the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). It is the story of a man who is brutally assaulted on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho and is left for dead on the side of the road. Two passing temple officials notice the unconscious man in the ditch, but instead of stopping to help they cross to the other side of the

road and carry on their way. Next a travelling Samaritan happens upon the victim. He is moved with compassion at what he sees. He bandages the man's wounds, lifts him on to his donkey, and transports him to a nearby inn, where he takes care of him overnight. The following day the Samaritan resumes his journey, but only after paying the innkeeper in advance to continue nursing the injured man back to health.

The impact of this parable has been immense, and its influence far exceeds the boundaries of strictly religious or theological discourse. The parable still figures frequently as a starting point for discussions in moral philosophy and social psychology about altruism and the nature of social responsibility, while in legal theory it continues to inform debates about the relationship between morality and law and the scope of personal liability. It has also played a huge role in medical ethics and in shaping the practice codes of several helping professions. It is frequently cited to encourage charitable pursuits in the local community and to support philanthropy on the global stage, especially in the form of emergency aid and relief assistance. In the political arena, good Samaritanism has been used to justify military interventions in other countries for humanitarian reasons, or to uphold human rights, or to remedy failed states. Most recently, it has figured in debates about immigration, the treatment of asylum seekers, and the obligations of hospitality towards displaced populations. The intellectual and cultural legacy of the parable has been enormous. As a commentator once remarked, this parable has built hospitals all over the world, and if it were truly heeded it would end racism, eliminate national hatreds, and abolish war.³

That the parable has particular pertinence to the theme of restorative justice is evident in at least four ways. First, it deals with an episode of criminal violence and, as we will see shortly, it affords remarkable insight into the experience of criminal victimization. Second, the story reflects extensively on the duty of care owed to the victims of crime by other members of the community. More words are devoted to describing the actions of the Samaritan than those of the two temple officials combined. His compassionate deeds are spelled out in extraordinary detail, because

³ A.T. Robertson is quoted to this effect by Peter Rhea Jones, "The Love Command in Parable," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 6 (1979): 248.

each individual action helps to define what is entailed in restoring victims to wholeness and autonomy following the tragedy they have suffered.

Third, it is hugely significant that the parable is told in response to a question from a lawyer about how to gain eternal life and about the scope of provisions in biblical law legislating care for one's neighbor (Lev. 19:17-18). We looked at this in the first lecture. This is the only parable in the Gospels that is expressly used to explain or defend an item of legal interpretation. The entire narrative is saturated with legal terminology, allusions, procedures, and assumptions that cannot be laid out in detail here but reinforce the parable's relevance to questions of legal theory and practice.

The fourth way in which the parable bears on the concerns of criminal justice was also discussed in the previous lecture. That Jesus deliberately casts a hated national enemy, a Samaritan, as the one who upholds God's law and fulfils the love commandment directly challenges our human propensity to categorize people dualistically as friend or foe, citizen or foreigner, good or bad, guilty or innocent, even as victim or offender. The parable subverts our tendency to divide the world simplistically into goodies and baddies, and teaches that goodness may be found even in those we most often call bad or evil. Nowhere is this lesson more relevant today than in the sphere of crime and justice.

My contention is that the parable has much to say about crime, the rule of law, and restorative justice. However, I will focus on just two dimensions: the insight the parable affords into the bitter experience of victimization—what it means experientially to be a victim of injustice and brutality—and its remarkable depiction of what is required to restore victims to wellbeing. In both respects the parable deals primarily with *criminal* victimization and repair. But its insights are equally applicable to other kinds of victimization—such as being a victim of family violence, social injustice, racial discrimination, political oppression, or countless other kinds of systemic evil. Research shows that victims of human malice, in whatever form it takes, have many similar reactions and needs, and I am sure you will be able to transfer much of the parable's message to your own area of specialist interest or community service.

The Bitterness of Victimization

The story opens with a “certain man” setting out of a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, some 23 km (15 miles) away. Nothing is said of his religious, ethnic, or social identity. He is simply a “man.” The road he traveled was steep and treacherous, twisting through barren terrain honeycombed with caves and gullies that provided ample hiding places for the many robbers who infested the area. It was extremely dangerous territory to pass through, and remained so for most of subsequent history. The journey would normally have taken at least six hours to complete on foot, but on this occasion the man’s progress is cut short by a violent attack. The Greek word used for his assailants (*lēstais*) indicates that they are not opportunist thieves but well-armed brigands or outlaws who preyed on vulnerable travelers in the countryside. Social banditry was a major problem at the time. Unemployed workers or peasants driven off their land through debt, famine, or excessive taxation resorted to brigandage in order to survive, and their primary victims were the ruling elites whom they held responsible for their plight.

Some commentators suggest that Jesus’ first hearers would have felt immediate sympathy for these highwaymen, viewing them as Robin Hood-type figures struggling valiantly against social and political oppression. But this seems fanciful to me. The penalty for brigandage was death, and fear of being attacked by bandits was widespread in the populace. Besides, the parable scarcely portrays the robbers in a positive light: they are responsible for extreme violence against a nameless victim whose simple humanity is highlighted while his social rank is left deliberately ambiguous. It is ambiguous because the only thing seized from him by his attackers is his clothing: “in addition to beating him they stripped him” (v. 30).⁴ In the ancient world, clothing was a consistent indicator of wealth and status, so the stripping of the victim could imply he was a wealthy man whose expensive clothing was worth stealing. Or it could indicate he was so poor that the only thing he possessed was the rags on his back, which the bandits took in spiteful frustration.

Whatever his social rank, the man is treated cruelly by his assailants and left for dead. The dramatic description of his attack captures no fewer than five common aspects of the experience of criminal victimization. These

⁴ My translation, to capture the temporal sequencing of the Greek construction.

need to be spelled out carefully at the beginning of the story, for if the man is ever to be restored to wellbeing, each dimension of his victimization will need to be addressed.

First, and most basically, his victimization was an occasion of profound disempowerment: “he fell into the hands of robbers.” Without warning, total strangers invaded his life, disrupted his normal routine, seized control of his person, and reduced him to abject impotence. From this point on, the man is portrayed as completely passive, utterly dependent on the goodwill of others for his very survival. He is radically disempowered by his assailants. That is what being a victim is fundamentally about—an enforced, uninvited, crippling, debilitating powerlessness.

Second, his victimization was an experience of physical violation: “they beat him,” to within an inch of his life, leaving him “half dead.” The phrase used for his beating (*plēgas epithentes*) is the same expression used for the ferocious flogging dished out to Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:23, cf. 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:23). The word “half dead” (*hemithanē*) is exceedingly rare in biblical Greek, though there is a striking parallel in a later papyrus document where a woman lays a complaint about an episode of domestic violence in which her brother and sister-in-law “nearly killed me by numbers of blows and left me half dead.”⁵ Clearly, the traveler is subjected to severe violence. His bodily integrity is brutally violated by his attackers and he is discarded like a worthless piece of garbage. Later, his rescuer must bandage his oozing wounds before attempting to move him to safety.

Third, the traveler’s victimization was an experience of psychological humiliation: “they stripped him.” As noted, clothing in the ancient world was an essential means of signaling one’s wealth, class, or religious role, and the ability to recognize one’s social peers by their appearance was enormously important. Wearing ornate clothing was a sign of personal dignity, honor, and status, while being stripped of clothing was a sign of humiliation and degradation. This is what happens to the victim: in being stripped nude and left exposed on the roadside, he is also profoundly humiliated. He is not only robbed of personal dignity; he is also deprived of his social belonging, for with his stolen clothing went all available markers of his ethnic identity

⁵ See James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 280.

and social location. As he is naked and unconscious (and thus unable to speak), all external clues as to his individual or cultural identity are taken away. He is reduced to an absolute minimum: an exposed, anonymous, insensible human being, whose only claim on anyone else's attention is his abject misery.

Fourth, the victim's experience is one of social isolation: "they went away, leaving him." He is left alone in a lonely place to die a lonely, lingering, solitary death. So isolated is he that it is only "by chance" (v. 31) that his battered and bruised body is seen by anyone at all. Even then, the first people who come across him elect to leave him in his abandoned state. He is twice forsaken, first by his attackers, then by his potential rescuers, whose indifference to his plight is a cruelty of equal magnitude. Victims of severe violence often speak of the disconnection they feel from those around them, even from close friends and acquaintances unable or unwilling to fathom their pain or bridge the gap to their desolate condition. The aloneness they experienced in being singled out by their assailant for harming and hurting is continued in a profound sense of aloneness in struggling with its aftermath. This sense of abandonment or forsakenness is perhaps the profoundest form of grief.

Finally, the victim's experience is one of enduring vulnerability: "they left him half dead." His suffering began at the time of the criminal assault, but his torment is not yet over. For the remainder of the story the injured man hovers between life and death. Those who stumble upon him on the road have a choice. They can either, like the priest and the Levite, regard him as good as dead already, beyond any worthwhile effort to restore. Or, like the merciful Samaritan, they can defy the logic of death and against all odds seek to fan the flicker of life back into flame. There is no middle way. Those who encounter victims can *either* surrender to the logic of destruction unleashed by the wrong that has been perpetrated, and reckon their powerless, violated, humiliated, and abandoned state to be hopeless, *or* they can strive to bring hope and healing to the victims, however remote those may seem at the time. The first option is starkly illustrated by the actions of the priest and the Levite. The second option is shown by the actions of the passing Samaritan.

An Unlikely Hero

In the first lecture I suggested that Jesus' original audience would have been taken aback at the appearance of a Samaritan in the story. They would have probably expected the third character to be an Israelite layman, since the threefold division of "priests, Levites and all the children of Israel" was a standard way of summarizing the religious diversity of the nation. Yet not only does Jesus use a Samaritan in place of an Israelite, he portrays him as responding in a way that puts the Jewish characters to shame. This unlikely character becomes the very embodiment of divine compassion towards the anonymous stranger lying motionless in the ditch. The Samaritan's actions are recounted in such exquisite detail because they exemplify exactly what is entailed in loving one's neighbor as oneself. For Jesus, neighbor-love is more than simple benevolence or showing respect for the equal rights of others. It is, rather, a love to be patterned after our love for God. Just as we are called to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, so we are called to show the same all-encompassing love for others. This, I suggest, is the hermeneutical key to the parable and its most disturbing challenge. The Samaritan's display of love is unreserved in its passion and commitment. It exceeds mere charity, for it engages all the powers of his personality: his sight, heart, hands, strength, time, possessions, and intelligence.

Dimensions of Restorative Care

First to be engaged are the eyes of the Samaritan. Like the priest and the Levite, "he saw" the victim, but unlike them he saw him up close; he drew near to his actual person. Whereas the priest came down "that road" and the Levite came to "the place," the Samaritan drew "near to him" (*kat' auton*). Whereas the other travelers looked at the victim superficially from a distance, the Samaritan entered more fully into his personal space. The three travelers all had the same physical evidence to go by. For all of them, the naked, motionless body was without visible signs of ethnicity or social status, and for all intents and purposes appeared to be dead. The priest and the Levite used such equivocal evidence as an excuse to do nothing.

The Samaritan "saw" a suffering human being and got involved in rescuing him. Perhaps for that reason the next thing to be engaged was his heart or feelings: "he was moved with compassion." This is the crucial turning

point in the story. The reference to compassion comes exactly halfway through the narrative and shatters the parallelism between the three by-passers. All three “see” the victim, but only the Samaritan is overcome with compassion. The verb used here (*esplangchnisthē*) denotes a gut-wrenching surge of emotion, a stirring in the innards. In Luke’s gospel, compassion is supremely a divine attribute. Just as God has compassion on expectant Israel and comes to her rescue in sending the Messiah (1:78, cf. v. 50), just as Jesus has compassion when he sees the widow of Nain burying her dead son and restores him to life (7:13), and just as the father of the Prodigal Son, himself an image for God, is filled with compassion when he sees his starving son stumbling up the road and rushes to embrace him (15:20), so the Samaritan is overcome with compassion when he sees the condition of the battered victim. Compassion expresses a God-like, and God-given, capacity to empathize with the sufferings of others, to enter into their world and share emotionally in their pain, while still regarding it as their pain, not one’s own.

There was an important sense in which the Samaritan’s heart overruled his head. The Samaritan could well have proceeded by way of logical calculation, first determining whether the victim was a fellow Samaritan, then choosing to show love to him. But there is no hint of any such reasoning. His instinctive response is one of compassion, not calculation. The casuistic strategy adopted by the priest and the Levite is simply not part of the Samaritan’s moral universe. Of course, having one’s heart in the right place is rarely enough in order to genuinely help someone in need; compassion may inspire the decision to help, but some level of rational analysis is also required to ensure that the assistance will actually prove beneficial. Deciding *how* to help is just as critical as deciding *whether* to help. In fact, even the decision whether to help is not the automatic product of compassionate feelings. An overpowering surge of emotion may even prove paralyzing in an observer and thus fail to generate any tangible results at all.

Not so for the Samaritan, however, for next to be activated are his hands and feet: “he went and bandaged his wounds.” His interior experience of compassion was translated into exterior deeds of deliverance, and it was his act of “doing mercy” (v. 37), not his empathetic feelings, that fulfilled the commandment to love his neighbor as himself. His movement towards the victim counteracted the victim’s isolation and rejection. The Samaritan’s

bandaging of the wounds counteracted the victim's physical violation and started him on the road to healing. In dressing the wounds the Samaritan uses his own possessions: the bandages were probably torn from his clothing or headgear, and the oil and wine came from his commercial cargo. Oil was employed as a household remedy for pain relief, and wine was commonly used as a disinfectant.

Oil and wine not only served as medicinal remedies; they also played an important role in temple worship as sacrificial libations (Lev. 23:13, cf. Rev. 6:6). We need not posit elaborate allegorical associations to recognize an additional layer of symbolic significance in the Samaritan's use of oil and wine to minister to the victim. In showing practical concern for the injured man's welfare, irrespective of religious considerations, he offers true worship to God. What God requires, more than ten thousand rivers of oil poured out in cultic worship, is justice, mercy, and humility (Micah 6:7-8; cf. Hosea 6:6; Isa. 58:5-9; Matt. 23:23). The Samaritan enacts the truth of this message, in contrast to the priest and Levite. They would have often poured oil and wine on the temple altar in Jerusalem in acts of profound devotion, but they failed to manifest their spiritual worship in merciful justice toward the crime victim. It is the hated Samaritan who offers the worship of justice and mercy, in pouring oil and wine on the man's wounds, not just on the religious altar.

Next, the Samaritan enlists his power to change the victim's circumstances: "he put him on his own animal and brought him to an inn." He picked the defenceless man up in his arms, heaved him onto his own mount, and removed him to a place of greater security. The implication of putting the victim on "his own animal" is that the Samaritan dismounted and went ahead on foot, leading the animal by a tether, like a servant boy. In seeking to transform the victim's circumstances, he displays striking humility as well as astonishing courage, given that he was still in bandit-infested territory.

Once at the inn the Samaritan devotes time and attention to the victim's recovery: "and he took care of him." The inn itself was probably a dirty, dangerous place; it was no luxury resort. It would have been a square enclosure open to the skies, with rows of stalls for animals and straw on the ground for their owners to sleep on beside their beasts. But the Samaritan does not sleep. Instead, he tends the wounded man throughout the night. The

victim is not abandoned for a second time, but is sustained in a relationship of sheltering care. He is not left alone.

At daybreak, the Samaritan must depart on business, but the victim is still not fit to travel. So the Samaritan “took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend’” (v. 35). There are several remarkable details in this final scene of the story. One is the amount of money involved: it is estimated that two denarii would have covered room and board for several weeks. The Samaritan makes provision for the long-term recuperation of the victim. He cannot be there to nurse him in person, so he deputizes the innkeeper to serve as his agent, instructing him to continue rendering the same “care” (*epimelēthēti*, v. 35) that he himself has offered overnight (*epemelēthē*, v. 34).

By accepting payment in advance, the innkeeper bound himself to carry out this commission. This is the most extraordinary detail of all. The Samaritan enters into an open-ended financial arrangement with the innkeeper, promising to cover any further expenses he might incur. His solemn promise, “I will repay you,” was a legal formula for taking over someone else’s debt. His concern was to afford the injured man protection from being imprisoned or enslaved for unpaid bills at the end of his stay. The Samaritan’s chances of being defrauded were considerable, but he makes himself vulnerable to extortion in order to spare the man the possibility of subsequent victimization.

That the Samaritan exhibits such concern for the future experience of the victim attests to an important, though uncomfortable, truth for all engaged in social justice and community development work. Once aid is given to those in need, that act initiates a chain of events in which the provider remains morally implicated. It is well known, especially in humanitarian work, that every intervention has unintended consequences, and even benevolently intended interventions may sometimes have a damaging impact on the beneficiary. Those who intervene are therefore obliged to anticipate, as best they can, the likely consequences of their involvement and to address negative effects that may flow from them. Good intentions are not sufficient. Moral foresight is also required, for well-meaning gestures may easily go awry.

The Samaritan anticipates the possibility that the victim may end up being indebted to the innkeeper and therefore be unrestored to wholeness. So he assumes personal responsibility to mitigate this potentially destructive outcome. He not only draws the victim into a community of care, he ensures that this community will continue into the future, as long as he has need of it. He also makes sure that the man will emerge from his time of convalescence into a position of independence and freedom. Charity alone can enslave; true justice seeks to restore autonomy and self-reliance.

All in all, the Samaritan performs some nine different actions. Such an extraordinary detailing of his deeds is not incidental; it is because they enact in concrete terms what it really means to “love one’s neighbor as oneself.” In essence, it means loving others in the same way we love God. The two obligations cannot be separated; they constitute a single reality. Just as our love for God must embrace all the dimensions of our personality—heart, soul, mind, and strength—so too must our love for others. The Samaritan was engaged emotionally, physically, materially, socially, financially, and morally in reaching out to the dying man on the roadside. He goes well beyond what was minimally necessary to save his life, and shows superlative dedication to his full restoration. His restoration to community is a re-empowerment and liberation, as well as a healing and recuperation, and for this reason the Samaritan’s response qualifies as an exemplary demonstration of restorative justice in its fullness.

Concluding Observations

The parable was told to a lawyer who asks Jesus to pronounce on the necessary conditions for inheriting eternal life (v. 25). Jesus replies by asking the lawyer what the law says on this matter. The lawyer responds by nominating wholehearted love for God and love of neighbor as the law’s most essential requirements. Jesus congratulates him on giving the “right” (*orthos*) answer, and tells him to “do” these commandments, and he will gain life. But the lawyer is after all a lawyer, and so he asks Jesus for a definitive statement on exactly “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29). Clearly, if “doing” the law by loving one’s neighbor is *the* critical requirement for entry to the new age, an unambiguous definition of the object of such love seems critically important. Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan, then

invites the lawyer to make his own interpretive judgment on the matter of neighborliness: “How does it seem *to you (dokei soi)*?” he asks. “Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

This question returns to the lawyer’s original inquiry but in a significantly modified form. It no longer focuses on the identity of the *other* as neighbor but on the questioner’s *own* identity as a neighbor. It is not “Who is my neighbor?” but “To whom am *I* a neighbor?” There is a shift from object to subject, from recipient of compassion to agent of compassion, and with it a decisive shift from the realm of legal abstraction to the world of relational engagement. So, which of the three men, the lawyer is asked, acted like a neighbor to the man in the ditch? Posed this way, only one answer is possible, for only one of the three characters did anything to benefit the victim. “The one who showed him mercy,” the lawyer replies. He had initially asked what he must “do” to win eternal life, and Jesus said he must “do” the law. By now indicating that the Samaritan “does” mercy, the lawyer implies that the heretical outsider meets the requirement of “doing” the law, which thus opens to him the door to eternal life. Jesus confirms this by issuing his second imperative to the lawyer: “Go you and do likewise” (v. 37, cf. v. 28). The present tense of the verb “do” underscores the constant or habitual nature of the specified action. Mercy is not a singular episode in one’s dealings with others; it is a comprehensive way of life to which every individual is called.

The message of the parable is inescapable: *the continual practice of mercy is an essential individual requirement for entry to the age of salvation*. The Samaritan qualifies to enter; the priest and the Levite do not. In this way, as one commentator puts it, the parable “exposes any religion with a mania for creeds and an anemia for deeds, an uptightness about orthodoxy not matched by a parallel concern for orthopraxy (cf. I Jn. 3:23).”⁶ It also exposes, I would add, any approach to criminal justice that places a concern for legal technicalities and professional decorum ahead of the actual needs of victims, and that diverts the wider social community from its overriding responsibility to work towards the restoration of victims to a place of health, strength, freedom, and autonomy.

Nothing is said in the parable about the need to catch and punish the robbers, though the justice of doing might be assumed. Nothing is said about

⁶ Jones, “Love Command,” 241.

what the kindhearted Samaritan would have done had he arrived on the scene in the middle of the attack, though he might well have intervened in some (hopefully nonviolent!) way. And nothing is said about the need to make the highways safer for travelers or about the value of drafting more police into the region to deter similar attacks in the future, though deterrence has its place and security is always worth considering. Martin Luther King, Jr. was right when he observed that “We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside. . . . but one day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed. . . . True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. . . . It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring.” The parable does not address these larger systemic issues in detail, not because they are unimportant or inessential to consider in any comprehensive approach to crime, law, and social justice, but because the story’s overriding concern is the duty of restoration towards the victim and the priority of the victim’s needs in the interpretation and administration of the regime of law.

Yet the parable is not totally silent about the need for systemic change. In my new book,⁷ I suggest that the action of transporting the victim to the inn and enlisting the innkeeper in his future care involved a transformation of his environmental circumstances, and in that sense intimates the need for structural change in the work of restorative justice. The same applies, as we saw in lecture one, in the Samaritan’s forging of a personal relationship with the Jewish victim, thereby ignoring and de-legitimizing the prevailing structures of violence and exclusion toward enemies. It is even possible to detect systemic implications in the absence from the narrative of any hint of counter-violence against the perpetrators of the crime, any suggestion that violence can serve the cause of justice, an assumption that was as much a commonplace in antiquity as it is today.

So, the parable has more to say on systemic and political matters than is often realized. But this is not its dominant focus, for the parable recognizes, I think, that there is something far more important and far more difficult for us as hearers than achieving social or systemic or political change—and

⁷ See *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice*, 133-37.

that is becoming truly loving persons who engage all the powers of our personalities on behalf of others. For that kind of love to emerge, we need more than political and social change; we need the power of God.

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THE BECHTEL LECTURES

The Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies were established at Conrad Grebel University College in 2000, through the generosity of Lester Bechtel, a devoted churchman with an active interest in Mennonite history. His dream was to make the academic world of research and study accessible to a broader constituency, and to build bridges of understanding between the academy and the church. The lecture series provides a forum through which the core meaning and values of the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and heritage can be communicated to a diverse audience, and be kept relevant and connected to today's rapidly changing world. Held annually and open to the public, the Bechtel lectures provide an opportunity for representatives of various disciplines and professions to explore topics reflecting the breadth and depth of Mennonite history, identity, faith, and culture. Lecturers have included Terry Martin, Stanley Hauerwas, Rudy Wiebe, Nancy Heisey, Fernando Enns, James Urry, Sandra Birdsell, Alfred Neufeld, Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, Ernst Hamm, Roger Epp, and John Roth.

Mennonite Systematic Theology in Retrospect and Prospect

David C. Cramer

In his address at the 1983 consultation on hermeneutics and systematic theology at the Institute of Mennonite Studies in Elkhart, Indiana, Marlin Jeschke began with a striking claim: “One of the obvious things about Mennonite systematic theology is that we don’t have one—at least in the usual professional sense of the term.”¹ If by “Mennonite systematic theology” (hereafter, MST) Jeschke simply meant “systematic theology written by a Mennonite,” then his claim is obviously false.² I take it, however, that he meant something stronger—something like “systematic theology written in an explicitly Mennonite key.” Thus, Jeschke contrasts the apparent void in MST with the prevalence of systematic theologies developed by “Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists,” to which we might add Wesleyans, evangelicals, the Eastern Orthodox, and others.³ Whereas these traditions produce systematic theologies that explicitly take account of the personalities and particularities of their respective tradition, Mennonites—at least up to 1983—have been hesitant to do so.

However, in that same year, Mennonite theologians began to engage in an unusual flurry of activity revolving around the role of systematic theology for Mennonites. Early in 1983 *The Conrad Grebel Review* released its inaugural issue that included the late A. James Reimer’s essay, “The

¹ Marlin Jeschke, “How Mennonites Have Done and Should Do Theology,” in *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 9.

² Cf., e.g., Daniel Kaufman, *Bible Doctrine: A Treatise on the Great Doctrines of the Bible Pertaining to God, Angels, Satan, the Church, and the Salvation, Duties and Destiny of Man* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1918); J.C. Wenger, *Introduction to Theology: An Interpretation of the Doctrinal Content of Scripture, Written to Strengthen a Childlike Faith in Christ* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1954); Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968); Edmund G. Kaufman, *Basic Christian Convictions* (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1972).

³ Jeschke, “How Mennonites Have Done and Should Do Theology,” 9.

Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology,” which sparked lively discussion on the role of systematic theology for Mennonites that continued virtually unabated for the ensuing several issues.⁴ Moreover, the consultation in which Jeschke—as well as Reimer and others—participated was held in June,⁵ and the essays from the consultation were collected and published as *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*.⁶

Having been born in February of the same year, I was unable to participate in these early discussions.⁷ Thus, as a modest contribution to a discussion already thirty years in progress—and in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of *The Conrad Grebel Review*’s initial issue—I would like to look back at the MSTs produced over the last three decades before returning to Jeschke’s statement and assessing to what extent it still might be true

⁴ A. James Reimer, “The Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology,” *The Conrad Grebel Review* [hereafter *CGR*] 1, no.1 (1983): 33-55; Howard John Loewen, [Reply to A. James Reimer, “The Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology”], *CGR* 1, no. 2 (1983): 56-58; A. James Reimer, “Further Reflections on a Possible Mennonite Theology [rejoinder to Howard John Loewen],” *CGR* 1, no. 3 (1983): 51-54; J. Denny Weaver, “Perspectives on a Mennonite Theology,” *CGR* 2, no. 3 (1984): 189-210; M. Darrol Bryant, [Response to J. Denny Weaver, “Perspectives on a Mennonite Theology”], *CGR* 3, no. 1 (1985): 95-99; Gordon D. Kaufman, “To the Discussion on ‘Mennonite Theology,’” *CGR* 3, no. 1 (1985): 99-101. Cf. J. Denny Weaver, “Mennonites: Theology, Peace, and Identity,” *CGR* 6, no. 2 (1988): 119-45; A. James Reimer, “Toward Christian Theology from a Diversity of Mennonite Perspectives,” *CGR* 6, no. 2 (1988): 147-59; Thomas Finger, [Reply to J. Denny Weaver, “Mennonites: Theology, Peace, and Identity”], *CGR* 6, no. 2 (1988): 161-64; J. Denny Weaver, [Response to A. James Reimer and Thomas Finger], *CGR* 7.1 (1989): 74-79; Alain Epp Weaver, “Options in Postmodern Mennonite Theology,” *CGR* 11, no.1 (1993): 65-76; and most recently, A. James Reimer, “Christian Theology Today: What Is at Stake?” *CGR* 26, no. 3 (2008): 4-26. Reimer’s many essays on Mennonite theology have been collected as well in A. James Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics*, Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies 1 (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2001).

⁵ In his *Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity: A Proposal for the Third Millennium* (Telford, PA: Pandora, 2000), J. Denny Weaver cites this consultation as “the first conference sanctioned by [Mennonite] denominational institutions specifically on systematic theology” (24).

⁶ Willard M. Swartley, ed., *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, Occasional Papers 7 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984). Contributors include Marlin E. Miller, Marlin Jeschke, J. Denny Weaver, Thomas Finger, A. James Reimer, and Howard John Loewen.

⁷ Although the consultation took place less than ten miles from my childhood home in nearby Mishawaka, Indiana.

today. My thesis is relatively straightforward: I suggest that, in an effort to find commonalities with other theological and religious traditions (often for legitimate reasons), we Mennonites have neglected to develop our own self-consciously *Mennonite* systematic theologies; thus, in our increasingly ecumenical and pluralistic context, we may be served best, paradoxically, by developing more radically particularistic, integral MSTs alongside the ecumenical and interreligious work already in progress.

A few words about how I will proceed are in order. First, I do not entertain directly some of the major questions raised in the early 1980s, namely whether MST is *possible* or whether MST is *desirable*. Although the influence of John Howard Yoder's decidedly unsystematic *ad hoc* approach to theologizing is still felt in many Mennonite circles and has much to commend it, I will simply assume an affirmative answer to these two particular questions.⁸ Related to these questions is another that I will leave aside, namely the question of the relationship between biblical and systematic theology and whether the two are in conflict or concord.⁹

Second, although the terms "Mennonite" and "systematic theology" are themselves contested, I do not intend to weigh in on their "proper" definitions. Rather, since my goal is to offer a report on the state of the discipline of MST, I allow these terms to function as broadly and inclusively as they are used in the literature. Thus, I use "Mennonite" advisedly, though I trust not too heavy-handedly. My choice of this term as opposed to others—such as "Anabaptist"—is both practical and principled. Practically speaking, the debate over systematic theology in *The Conrad Grebel Review* from its inception proceeded largely by self-proclaimed Mennonites and was largely over specifically Mennonite theology.¹⁰ Therefore, I simply have adopted a term already in use. From a more principled perspective, however, I sometimes fear that discussions of "Anabaptism" tend to downplay or ignore

⁸ Cf. Gerald W. Schlachach, "Anthology in Lieu of System: John H. Yoder's Ecumenical Conversations as Systematic Theology," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* [hereafter *MQR*] 71, no. 2 (1997): 305-309.

⁹ For thoughtful essays on this question from varying standpoints see Ben C. Ollenburger, ed., *So Wide a Sea: Essays on Biblical and Systematic Theology*, Text-Reader Series 4 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1991), including essays by Thomas Finger, Elmer A. Martens, A. James Reimer, Gordon D. Kaufman, Mary H. Schertz, Howard John Loewen, and Ben C. Ollenburger.

¹⁰ See references in note 4 above.

the historical particularity of the Mennonite tradition in favor of ethical abstractions or core theological essentials.¹¹ While there may be a place for discussing the essentials of the “Anabaptist vision,” that is not my intent here. Instead, I am interested in a rich and robust Mennonite theology. That said, I am open to including in the discussion near relatives to Mennonites, including Hutterites, Amish, and certain Brethren groups, not to mention the immediate forebears of the Mennonite tradition in the 16th century. My use of “Mennonite,” then, is more or less synonymous with the more inclusive term currently in vogue: “Anabaptist-Mennonite.”

The term “systematic theology” is even slipperier than “Mennonite.” The 1983 essays typically defined systematic theology in regard to comprehensiveness, coherence, and the like. For example, in his essay in the *Explorations of Systematic Theology* volume, Thomas N. Finger reasons as follows:

‘Systematic’ is desirable insofar as it helps express the sort of *comprehensiveness* that Mennonites have always felt about our convictions: that they apply to all dimensions of experience. ‘Systematic’ can convey that there is coherence and continuity among God’s works; and that because of this, real relationships exist among all dimensions of the cosmos. ‘Systematic’ Theology would then be the attempt to speak of such things in a coherent, orderly—rather than piecemeal—fashion.¹²

Finger resists understanding “systematic” in terms of an “academic striving for completeness,”¹³ however, and thus argues that the challenge for Mennonites is to offer a comprehensive, holistic theology that does not thereby become totalizing.¹⁴ In what follows, I adopt his description as a

¹¹ See, e.g., Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2010), for which the back cover asks: “[W]hat does Anabaptism look like when not clothed in Mennonite or Amish traditions?”

¹² Thomas Finger, “Is ‘Systematic Theology’ Possible from a Mennonite Perspective?” in *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, ed. Willard M. Swartley, 49; italics in original.

¹³ Finger, “Systematic Theology,” 49.

¹⁴ Cf. A. James Reimer, “Mennonite Systematic Theology and the Problem of Comprehensiveness,” in *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, ed. Willard M. Swartley, 57–82. Like Finger, Reimer writes that the “*raison d’être* of all systematic

provisional, working definition of systematic theology.

Third and finally, while my goal is to provide a review of the field of MST over the past thirty years, I make no claim to offering an exhaustive treatment in respect of either breadth or depth. In regard to breadth, I delimit my discussion to six important texts taken to be representative of the trends that I describe.¹⁵ In regard to depth, I focus my assessment of each text on the question of how—and to what extent—it appropriates the Mennonite tradition into its project, leaving aside other important considerations.

With those provisos in mind, I proceed as follows. First, I classify the MSTs produced over the last three decades into two waves, “anti-sectarian MST” and “dialogical MST” respectively. I then return to Jeschke’s statement to ask whether it might be time for a third wave, “integral MST,” offering tentative suggestions as to what such an integral MST might entail.

First Wave (1980s–1990s): Anti-Sectarian MST

The first wave spans roughly the 1980s and 1990s, and is marked by a seeming desire to make Mennonite theology ecumenically respectable and relevant by downplaying its supposed “sectarianism” and focusing instead on how it can and should be a theology for all Christians. In some ways this approach is entirely understandable, given the then prevailing view of Mennonites as the paradigmatic “sect type”—a hangover from the religio-sociological typologies of Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and H. Richard Niebuhr—which often served as a convenient excuse for those from the “church type” to ignore or further marginalize Mennonite theology. The theologies in this wave seem dominated by the concern to emerge from

theology is the passion for comprehensiveness” (57).

¹⁵ A more comprehensive discussion would need to include, minimally, the treatments of the doctrine of atonement by John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1986); Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011); and Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). It might also include shorter works, such as Daniel Liechty’s slender volume, *Theology in Postliberal Perspective* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990) [later republished as *Reflecting on Faith in a Post-Christian Time* with a foreword by Duane Friesen and responses by Christian Early, Marlin Jeschke, Michele Hershberger, and Brian McLaren (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2003)].

this primarily pejorative sectarian label. As a result, though these theologies are deeply rooted in basic Mennonite convictions, their indebtedness to Mennonite thought and life often remains implicit or is even explicitly downplayed. Indeed, though glancing references to an “Anabaptist,” “Free Church,” “Peace Church,” “Believer’s Church,” or “Radical Reformation” approach can occasionally be found, more often these theologies simply go by the broader label “Christian.”

Thomas Finger

Thomas N. Finger’s two-volume *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, published in 1985 and 1987,¹⁶ represents to my knowledge the first major systematic theology produced by a Mennonite in the 1980s. By writing his systematic theology in an eschatological key and focusing on the *kerygma* of the early church, Finger is arguably drawing on Mennonite themes. Nevertheless, though he writes about the significance of “Contextual Theologies,”¹⁷ he neglects to say anything about the context from which he writes. Finger makes very few explicit references to Mennonite thinkers, including no entry for Menno Simons or Mennonites in his extensive index. In the introduction to his second volume, Finger does admit that “the believer’s church experience influences our attempt to write theology from the perspective of active Christian communities,” but he is quick to note that he does not “develop a sectarian theology, applicable only to historic believer’s churches.”¹⁸

C. Norman Kraus

C. Norman Kraus’s *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple’s Perspective* and *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode*, published in 1987 and 1991 respectively,¹⁹ are slightly more explicit about their Anabaptist commitments than Finger’s volumes. Kraus states from

¹⁶ Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985); vol. 2 (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1987).

¹⁷ See Finger, *Christian Theology*, vol. 1, 61–78.

¹⁸ Finger, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2, 12.

¹⁹ C. Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple’s Perspective* (Scottsdale: Herald, 1987); id., *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1991).

the outset that his work is “a ‘peace theology’ in the Anabaptist tradition,”²⁰ and throughout these volumes he makes repeated use of the theology of Menno Simons if not Mennonites *per se*. However, his aim is not so much a retrieval or exposition of the Mennonite tradition as a reinterpretation or correction of it for global, intercultural purposes. Having taught overseas for many years, Kraus appropriates Asian—particularly Japanese—perspectives for his own work. He writes: “For the Japanese church the conversation has proved fruitful, but I must hasten to explain that I have no illusions that my work is a ‘Japanese theology.’ At best it is a kind of bridge which I hope will help the Japanese to move beyond a repetition of the Western theological dialogue to a fresh examination of the scriptural tradition for themselves.”²¹ He thus makes it clear that his Christological approach “does not necessarily imply a sectarian or non-Trinitarian position.”²² So, though Kraus may be a bit more explicitly Anabaptist than Finger, his desire for his theology to be viewed as non-sectarian seems just as strong.

Indeed, though explicitly Anabaptist, Kraus appears ambivalent at best about the particularly Mennonite theology with which he was raised. He (perhaps rightly) describes “Anabaptist-Mennonites” as somewhat suspicious of theology,²³ and in his brief autobiographical reflections states that “[m]y own life pilgrimage has taken me across many cultural boundaries. I began in a sheltered Mennonite community where a naive commingling of biblical and Greek concepts provided the mold for theological thinking. My first introduction to Anabaptism was also within this ‘orthodox’ context.”²⁴ But after traveling the world, Kraus “became aware that biblical presuppositions and definitions were not necessarily the same as those of my Mennonite biblicism.”²⁵ Instead, he found that “our postmodern Western culture has growing similarities with the Asian cultures,” which led him to hope that what he had written “may even help to bridge between the two cultural worlds.”²⁶

²⁰ Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 17; 15-19; *God Our Savior*, 13-19.

²¹ Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 18.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Kraus, *God Our Savior*, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Gordon Kaufman

If Kraus indicates movement toward a more explicitly Anabaptist—even if not strictly speaking Mennonite—theology, our final example, Gordon D. Kaufman's 1993 work, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*,²⁷ swings the pendulum far in the opposite direction. Rather than drawing from Mennonite or even the broader Christian tradition, Kaufman proposes “a full-scale reconception of Christian theology.”²⁸ He does note that the position taken in his book expresses “four fundamental dimensions of my own faith and piety,” which we might see as influenced in part by Mennonite theology, including:

(a) my deep sense of the ultimate mystery of life; (b) my feeling of profound gratitude for the gift of humanness and the great diversity which it manifests; (c) my belief (with this diversity especially in mind) in the continuing importance of the central Christian moral demand that we love and care for not only our neighbors but even our enemies; and (d) my conviction (closely connected with this last point) that the principal Christian symbols continue to provide a significant resource for the orientation of human life.²⁹

Beyond these somewhat vague Christian platitudes, however, Kaufman sets out to build “a framework which can accommodate many different religious (and secular) perspectives (so long as they are genuinely humanizing), and which permits the use of quite diverse mythical and metaphysical symbols (so long as they are recognized to be symbols and not reified).”³⁰ He admits that his “qualified” and “agnostic” stance may not be emotionally satisfying for many religious adherents, but he argues that it

. . . provides a distinctive empowerment of its own: namely to

²⁷ Gordon D. Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993). See Reimer's analysis of Kaufman in “The Nature and Possibility of Mennonite Theology,” *CGR* 1, no. 1 (1983): 33-55, reprinted in *Mennonites and Classical Theology* (chapter 10).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xii. Cf. Gordon D. Kaufman, “My Life and My Theological Reflection: Two Central Themes,” *CGR* 20, no. 1 (2002): 60-89.

³⁰ Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery*, xiii.

open ourselves to everything human, to every position and claim; to listen sympathetically to every kind of experience—Christian, communist, Buddhist, deconstructionist, radical feminist, Muslim, liberal humanist, Nazi; to search for the human in everyone. . . . This is an empowerment of radical inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, an empowerment that encourages gratitude and respect for the humanity of every person and community, not only for those who happen to agree with us.³¹

Indeed, for Kaufman, the central theological sin can be summed up in a single word: parochialism. He writes that “all humans are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent in many ways; and . . . we dare not, therefore, continue to live and think simply in the limited terms which our much too parochial traditions have bequeathed us.”³² It should thus come as no surprise that mention of Kaufman’s Mennonite heritage is completely absent from this work.

In sum, while Finger, Kraus, and Kaufman each have their own unique style and content, they all seem to share a similar motivation or impulse, namely to present their theology as not uniquely Mennonite but rather as broadly Christian or even global or pluralistic. They each disavow sectarianism or parochialism in theology, though their indebtedness to their Mennonite heritage remains visible in the questions they raise and their approaches to answering them.

Second Wave (2000s–present): Dialogical MST

Another generation removed from the “sectarian” charge—and no doubt benefiting from the pioneering work of the first wave—theologies of the second wave are less reserved about their Mennonite rootedness. Indeed, during this second wave we find the first systematic theologies to include in their titles

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., xv. Cf. *ibid.*, 133: “For those of us for whom a global consciousness is beginning to take hold, *all particular and thus parochial religious and cultural and philosophical traditions are now outmoded and superseded to the extent that they cannot give an adequate or illuminating interpretation of our new historical situation, these new sociocultural facts about human life*”; italics in original. See also, *ibid.*, 25, 26, 101, 110, 120, 122, 131–39, 312–21, 408, 468.

the word “Anabaptist” (though not yet “Mennonite”). Unlike the first wave, where explicit mention of Mennonite theologians or groups was sparse, here such references abound. Second wave theologians seem more confident and assertive about the contextual nature of their particular perspectives. Despite these differences, however, the second wave shares with the first an impulse to theologize primarily in interaction with other theologians and traditions, whether historic (Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Molina) or contemporary (black, feminist, womanist, liberationist, neo-orthodox, evangelical). Putting Mennonite theology in dialogue with these other theologies creates possibilities for creative syntheses as well as challenges for traditional Mennonite ways of thought and practice. At the same time, such a dialogical mode risks distorting or truncating Mennonite theology by describing it in the categories of other theological traditions or narrowing it to its core essentials in order to compare and contrast it with these other traditions. These possibilities and risks are demonstrated by three major theologies of the second wave.

Thomas Finger (redux)

Approximately two decades after his two-volume *Christian Theology*, Thomas Finger returned in 2004 with his *magnum opus*, the six-hundred-page *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive*,³³ which even its harsher critics admit is in a class of its own.³⁴ The overtly and pervasively Anabaptist character of *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* marks a decisive break from the first wave, including Finger’s own earlier work. Nevertheless, as Finger himself freely concedes, his approach is driven largely by a desire “to show how Anabaptist insights can illumine issues of concern to evangelicals, mainline ecumenicals, Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox.”³⁵ With a hint of irony, he uses language that so troubled his

³³ Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

³⁴ See, e.g., J. Denny Weaver, “Parsing Anabaptist Theology: A Review Essay of Thomas N. Finger’s *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*,” *Direction* 34, no. 2 (2005): 241-63. Though quite critical of Finger’s general approach, Weaver concedes that Finger’s volume “is impressive for more than its size. . . . No similar book exists in the world of Anabaptist and Mennonite theology” (241).

³⁵ Finger, *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 103. See also Thomas N. Finger, “Response to J.

predecessors to describe his project: "I hope that my 'sectarian' tradition can make significant ecumenical contributions."³⁶

While Finger certainly succeeds in demonstrating Anabaptism's "significant ecumenical contributions," doing so may come with certain tradeoffs. By continually putting Anabaptist theology in dialogue with other traditions in order to demonstrate the former's contribution to the latter, what results can be a slightly idiosyncratic form of Anabaptist theology. The idiosyncrasies can be seen by what Finger emphasizes. For instance, in their joint review of the book, Gayle Gerber Koontz and John Rempel note that "Finger's ecumenical interests press him to try to recover [the] language [of divinization] because it may be fruitful for inter-church understanding," particularly with Eastern Orthodox theology.³⁷ However, while the language of divinization serves an important ecumenical function for Finger—and can indeed be found in some Anabaptist sources—the reviewers conclude that "as Anabaptist-Mennonites have drawn from historical sources for their life and thought over the years, 'divinization' has not risen to the top. Finger emphasizes a term that most scholars and church members have left secondary."³⁸ Finger's idiosyncrasies can also be seen by what he omits. In an illuminating exposition, Timothy Paul Erdel describes his bewilderment over the omission in Finger's entire work of any meaningful discussion of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" and its significance for Anabaptist theology through

Denny Weaver's 'Parsing Anabaptist Theology,'" *Direction* 35, no. 1 (2006): 134-53, especially 142: "My concerns connect more with . . . communicating the Anabaptist perspective to others. Anabaptists, in my view, have done so little theology over the centuries that we are almost entirely ignorant of this field and illiterate of its vocabulary. How can we explicate our implicit theology for others unless we at least learn their vocabularies? How can we communicate our perspective without asking how it lines up with their categories? I want not only to articulate this perspective for ourselves, but also to introduce it to a much larger ecclesial and scholarly world. I find it obvious that comparing our outlook with others can reveal differences, sometimes great differences, as well as similarities." Cf. Thomas N. Finger, "Appropriating Other Traditions While Remaining Anabaptist," *CGR* 17, no. 2 (1999): 52-68.

³⁶ Finger, *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, 103.

³⁷ Gayle Gerber Koontz and John Rempel, review of *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive*, *MQR* 80, no. 4 (2006): 699.

³⁸ *Ibid.* This point is made forcefully as well in Weaver, "Parsing Anabaptist Theology," though cf. Finger, "Response to J. Denny Weaver's 'Parsing Anabaptist Theology.'"

the centuries.³⁹ While its importance for Mennonites can be overstated, the Sermon certainly merits some mention in a volume purporting to articulate Anabaptist theology with special attention to historical and biblical considerations.

Kirk MacGregor

Whereas Finger's work has gained wide recognition—both positive and negative—for its creative and original approach, another creative and original work, Kirk R. MacGregor's *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology*,⁴⁰ unfortunately has gone largely unnoticed since its 2007 publication.⁴¹ I suspect this is partly because MacGregor's stated intention of combining Molinist philosophical theology with Anabaptist practical theology is so idiosyncratic that it leaves both philosophical (Roman Catholic) theologians and practical (Anabaptist) theologians unsure of what do with the book as a whole. Indeed, though MacGregor promises a "Molinist-Anabaptist Synthesis" and cautions against "creating a false dichotomy between theory and application,"⁴² ultimately his book falls into the classic "two list" model of theology, drawing from another tradition (in this case, Roman Catholic) for philosophical or systematic theology while leaning on Anabaptism for theological ethics. Thus, after a prolegomenal chapter, MacGregor spends four chapters on philosophical theology with almost no mention of Anabaptist theology⁴³ before concluding with four chapters of more practical

³⁹ Timothy Paul Erdel, "Holiness among the Mennonites," *Reflections* 10 (2008): 13.

⁴⁰ Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 2007).

⁴¹ Though published in 2007, I have found only two reviews of the book to date: Thomas N. Finger's short one paragraph book notice in *Religious Studies Review* 35, no. 1 (2009): 39-40 and my own review in *MQR* 83, no. 4 (2009): 656-59. Note that MacGregor is writing from a Brethren background rather than a Mennonite one, strictly speaking. For a brief autobiographical sketch, see Kirk R. MacGregor, "Beyond Anselm: A Biblical and Evangelical Case for Nonviolent Atonement," in *The Activist Impulse: Essays on the Intersection of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism*, ed. Jared S. Burkholder and David C. Cramer (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 356.

⁴² MacGregor, *Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology*, 60.

⁴³ Topics include "Scientia Media according to Molina, Not Arminius" (chap. 2), "A Molinist and Contra-openness Approach to Scriptural Anthropomorphisms" (chap. 3), "The Coexistence of God and Genuinely Gratuitous Evil" (chap. 4), and "Theology Proper" (chap. 5).

import with little mention of Molinism.⁴⁴ Thus, while his work is the most explicitly dialogical of all the theologies surveyed thus far, the effect of his approach is to minimize Anabaptist theology to a couple of bare, practical essentials: church discipline and nonviolence. Other aspects of theology are left to more refined Roman Catholic theologians or evangelical analytic philosophers.

J. Denny Weaver

On the one hand, J. Denny Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement* is the most narrowly focused of any of the theologies considered thus far, centering on just one doctrine, the atonement.⁴⁵ On the other, the ramifications of this book are perhaps the most comprehensive and theologically revolutionary of any of them.⁴⁶ His project is no less than to develop a nonviolent theology based on his Mennonite tradition that will serve as a rival to classical orthodox theology or what he elsewhere calls "theology-in-general."⁴⁷ In this respect his book is arguably the most explicitly Mennonite of all the theologies we have surveyed.⁴⁸

In his critique of Finger's work Weaver discusses two fundamental starting points for Mennonite theology: one that "seek[s] points of

⁴⁴ Topics include "Inerrancy and the Importance of Reading Scripture Biblio-critically" (chap. 6), "The Sacraments and Church Discipline" (chap. 7), "Women in Ministry" (chap. 8), and "The Historical Jesus' Non-violent Yet Socially Revolutionary Conception of the Kingdom of God" (chap. 9). Arguably only chapters 7 and 9 deal explicitly with Anabaptism, and even here MacGregor departs from historic Anabaptist views or fails to consider them altogether.

⁴⁵ J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011 [2001]).

⁴⁶ Weaver describes his project rather mildly as an attempt at "thinking out of the box" (*Nonviolent Atonement*, xi).

⁴⁷ Weaver, *Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity*, especially chapters 2 and 3; cf. J. Denny Weaver, "The General versus the Particular: Exploring Assumptions in 20th-Century Mennonite Theologizing," *CGR* 17, no. 2 (1999): 28-51.

⁴⁸ Finger's *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* has roughly three and a half times as many references to Mennonites (75 as opposed to 21 in Weaver's *Nonviolent Atonement*), but aside from the fact that Finger's text is nearly twice as long as Weaver's, many of Finger's references to Mennonites are merely descriptive, whereas Weaver seems to want to identify with the Mennonite tradition more explicitly. See, e.g., Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 5-6: "For some years, I have been thinking about issues of violence and atonement from the pacifist perspective of the Mennonite tradition to which I choose to belong."

commonality with other traditions” and one that “locat[es] those points where Anabaptism differs from other traditions.”⁴⁹ Weaver is critical of theologians such as Finger and Reimer who adopt the former methodological approach, while he invokes John Howard Yoder as a positive example of one who adopts the latter approach, which Weaver himself adopts in *The Nonviolent Atonement*.⁵⁰ However, while he views these approaches as polar opposites, they appear to be two sides of the same coin. Both end up describing Mennonite theology in terms of theologies external to it—either accommodating these theologies or reacting against them. Finger’s *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* does the former, while Weaver’s *Nonviolent Atonement* does the latter. Both approaches have largely the same effect: truncating Mennonite theology and turning it into little more than a few distinctive or essential features, such as—in Weaver’s case—nonviolence and the perspective of the marginalized.

Indeed, while Weaver criticizes Finger and others for describing Mennonite theology too much in the terms of others, this seems to be precisely what Weaver does in *The Nonviolent Atonement*. After spending roughly the first third of the book laying out his Narrative Christus Victor model of the atonement, he spends roughly the second two-thirds putting his view in dialogue with other perspectives, principally black, feminist, and womanist views of the atonement.⁵¹ It seems, ironically, that Weaver has taken the same approach that he criticized in Finger: describing Mennonite theology largely in terms of outside traditions. A good argument could be had over which traditions are more compatible with Mennonite theology—classical theology or contemporary contextual theologies.⁵² But regardless

⁴⁹ Weaver, “Parsing Anabaptist Theology,” 257.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 257–58.

⁵¹ Weaver begins his book thus: “Sharp debates about the death of Jesus sparked by feminist and womanist theologians remain on the cutting edge of discussions of Christology and atonement” (*Nonviolent Atonement*, 1). My observations are not meant to suggest that Mennonite theology is necessarily distinct from these contextual theologies. Cf., e.g., the following issues of *CGR* devoted to women’s issues and perspectives: “Women in the Church,” *CGR* 8, no. 3 (1990); “In a Mennonite Voice: Women Doing Theology,” *CGR* 10, no. 1 (1992); “Wind and Fire: Anabaptist Women Doing Theology,” *CGR* 14, no. 2 (1996); “Gifts of the Red Tent: Women Creating—Women Doing Theology 2003 Conference,” *CGR* 23, no. 1 (2005).

⁵² Another good debate could be had over whether classical theology and contemporary contextual theologies need be placed in opposition to each other.

of how that debate is settled, such differences should not obscure the fundamental methodological similarity between these dialogical theologies. Each describes Mennonite theology predominantly in terms of the traditions with which the author seeks to engage in dialogue. Moreover, in each case this leads not only to some fruitful exchange between traditions but to certain aspects of Mennonite theology being minimized or overemphasized, thus leaving a somewhat truncated picture of it as a whole.

Integral MST: A Third Wave?

We return now to Marlin Jeschke's 1983 statement with which we began: "One of the obvious things about Mennonite systematic theology is that we don't have one—at least in the usual professional sense of the term." Could Jeschke make this statement in 2013? Given our survey of six major, "professional" MSTs from the last thirty years—to which more could be added—it is certainly not *obvious* that we do not have a Mennonite systematic theology. However, if we take him to refer to the stronger, more explicit form of MST analogous to Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist systematic theologies, then it is equally not obvious that we do have one.

Thus, in light of the above discussion, I propose two counterintuitive claims. The first claim is this: In order to move beyond sectarianism, Mennonite theologians may need to stop worrying about being sectarian and to focus instead on simply being Mennonite. The second is like the first: The best way for Mennonite theologies to be dialogical and ecumenical going forward may be to stop trying so hard to be dialogical and ecumenical, and to focus instead on simply being Mennonite. These two related claims are not meant to be universally true principles—valid for all times and places—but rather to apply to the particular situation Mennonite theology finds itself in today.

What would a more integral MST look like? I do not presume to answer that question definitively or even satisfactorily. (I suspect a proper answer cannot be given until actual attempts at developing integral MSTs have been made.) Nevertheless, my inclination is to see integral MST as more about a way of doing theology than about the specific conclusions one reaches. Indeed, it might be argued that reifying conclusions is often what leads to problems. Thus, in conclusion I venture to offer only some tentative,

general strategies or directions for developing a more integral MST. From my admittedly limited reading of the tradition, I suggest that a coherent way of moving forward with integral MST will involve the following elements.

First, integral MST will be thoroughly rooted in Scripture as its pre-eminent norm. It thus will not be embarrassed by the particularity of the biblical story of God's working in the world with and through Israel, Jesus, and the church. At the same time, it will avoid "flattening" Scripture and will not be ashamed to admit of a distinct Mennonite hermeneutic that emphasizes the life and teachings of Jesus as the high point of biblical revelation.⁵³ While not ignoring the rest of Scripture or falling prey to our sometimes Marcionite tendencies, integral MST—as with integral Mennonite faith and practice—will be formed and informed by the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

Second, integral MST will be rooted in the great Christian tradition, though with a few caveats. For one, in order to be reasonably independent, integral MST will need to sit lightly with respect to any particular theologian or theological movement within the great tradition. Thus, it will assume neither commonality nor tension with particular pre- or non-Mennonite theologies from the outset. Instead, it will begin with the particular Mennonite stream of the great tradition and see what other theologians or theological traditions are appealed to, ignored, or denounced from within that stream. Indeed, just as doing Mennonite theology with ecumenical or

⁵³ The question of Mennonite biblical hermeneutics is much too daunting to be addressed with any nuance here. For perspectives on this topic, see William Klassen, "Anabaptist Hermeneutics: The Letter and the Spirit," *MQR* 40, no. 2 (1966): 83-96; John Howard Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of the Anabaptists," *MQR* 41, no. 4 (1967): 291-308; C. Norman Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible, 1750-1950," *MQR* 41, no. 4 (1967): 309-29; Ben C. Ollenburger, "The Hermeneutics of Obedience: A Study of Anabaptist Hermeneutics," *Direction* 6, no. 2 (1977) 19-31; William M. Swartley, ed., *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives*, Text-Reader Series 1 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984); John D. Roth, "Community as Conversation: A New Model of Anabaptist Hermeneutics," in *Anabaptist Currents: History in Conversation with the Present*, edited by Carl F. Bowman and Stephen L. Longenecker (Bridgewater, VA: Penobscot, 1995), 51-64; Stuart Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, Studies in the Believers Church Tradition, 3 (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2000); David C. Cramer, "Evangelical Hermeneutics, Anabaptist Ethics: John Howard Yoder, the *Solas*, and the Question of War," in *The Activist Impulse: Essays on the Intersection of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism*, ed. Jared S. Burkholder and David C. Cramer (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 379-405.

dialogical concerns at the forefront can skew Mennonite theology, so can doing it while consciously trying to ignore other traditions. The latter would lead to an ahistorical abstraction since, as we have seen, Mennonites have always done theology in conversation with other traditions.

Integral MST, therefore, will begin its theological inquiry—after the Bible—with its own confessions and theologians, from the Schleithem, Kempen, and Dordrecht Confessions,⁵⁴ to the writings of Balthasar Hubmaier, Conrad Grebel, Michael Sattler, Melchior Hoffman, Pilgram Marpeck, Menno Simons, Peter Riedemann, and Dirk Philips in the 16th century,⁵⁵ to Daniel Kauffman, Harold Bender, J. C. Wenger, John Howard Yoder, Gordon Kaufman, John Driver, C. Norman Kraus, A. James Reimer, Thomas N. Finger, and J. Denny Weaver in the 20th—as well as many more in between.⁵⁶ For this reason, it actually may be an advantage that Mennonites have resisted writing integral MSTs for so long. As we have seen, earlier waves of theologians were writing theology *as* Mennonites rather than writing self-consciously Mennonite theology *per se*. As such, they may have been able to take creative license with the Mennonite tradition in ways that a more integral MST may not have done. While I have argued that this at times produced distortions in various directions, it also produced creative material that now can be incorporated into the Mennonite theological tradition. And if we follow Alasdair MacIntyre's definition of tradition as "an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined,"⁵⁷ then we can see these examples of theology

⁵⁴ For translations of these and other early Anabaptist confessions, see Karl Koop, ed., *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition 1527–1660*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 11 (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ See, e.g., H. Wayne Pipkin, ed., *Essays in Anabaptist Theology*, Text Reader Series 5 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994).

⁵⁶ This proposal might be read as a modified form of what J. Denny Weaver offers as a "theoretical possibility, a[n] ... approach to an Anabaptist theology [that] construct[s] theology entirely of material written by Anabaptists" ("Parsing Anabaptist Theology," 243). I would replace "constructs theology entirely of" by "begins theological inquiry with."

⁵⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 12. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2007 [1981]), 222: "[W]hen a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose."

by Mennonites as contributing to—rather than moving away from—the ongoing Mennonite theological tradition.

At its most basic level, of course, Mennonite theology just is theology done by Mennonites. Calling for a new approach to MST thus in no way discounts or rejects the contributions of earlier approaches. Moreover, given the polygenetic, multivalent character of the Mennonite tradition, integral MST will need to be open to hearing from a diversity of perspectives within the tradition, including those previously marginalized, such as Mennonite women and Latin American theologians. It is thus probably just as accurate to speak of MSTs in the plural as is in the singular.

Thirdly, integral MSTs will make recourse to reasoned argumentation without thereby becoming rationalistic. Rather than beginning with foundational, universal first principles, Mennonite theologians will recognize the historical particularity of all forms of reasoning and will be unembarrassed by our inability to persuade others with different starting points than ours. To cite MacIntyre again, Mennonite theologians will allow that “all reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional mode of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition.”⁵⁸ In other words, they will welcome what has come to be called “traditioned reason.” While freely making recourse to good argumentation, integral MSTs will be cautious about attempts at developing natural or fundamental theologies, choosing instead to “lay no other foundation than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ,” as the verse that became Menno’s life motto states.⁵⁹

*Finally, integral MSTs will be keenly sensitive to the place of experience for theology.*⁶⁰ Mennonite theologians will understand the term “experience”

⁵⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222. Cf. John Howard Yoder, *A Pacifist Way of Knowing: John Howard Yoder’s Nonviolent Epistemology*, ed. Christian E. Early and Ted G. Grimsrud (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010).

⁵⁹ That is, 1 Corinthians 3:11. Indeed, “Every book and every little pamphlet he wrote have on the front page [this] motto” (*Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, s.v. “Menno Simons (1496–1561)” [by Cornelius Krahn and Cornelius J. Dyck], www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/M4636ME.html [accessed 30 April 2012]).

⁶⁰ I am utilizing the so-called “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” in my conclusion, though with a distinctly Mennonite twist. United Methodist theologian Albert C. Outler, who coined the term, writes that the Quadrilateral allows for theologizing that is both “eclectic and pluralistic” and “coherent, stable, whole,” thus enabling one to avoid “the barren extremes of ‘dogmatism,’

broadly to include both the personal and the communal.⁶¹ Therefore, MSTs will be contextual, shaped by one's particular life experiences, but at the same time corporate, shaped by the collective experiences of one's community and by the experiences of Mennonites around the world and throughout the centuries.⁶² After all, it is not without good reason that the most important book for Mennonites—after the Bible—is the *Martyrs Mirror*.⁶³

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on the one side, and 'indifferentism,' on the other," and thus "has the ecumenical advantage of making fruitful linkages with other doctrinal traditions without threatening to supplant any of them" (Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20, no. 1 [Spring 1985]: 11-12, 9, 17). I trust, therefore, that borrowing this methodological framework does not betray my impulse toward integral MST.

⁶¹ On the role and importance of the community for Mennonite theologizing, see John Howard Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood: A Protestant Perspective," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 15-45.

⁶² As one anonymous reviewer of this essay noted, integral MST will need "to take more seriously the actual worship life, discipleship practices, peace initiatives, mission activities, etc., as well as failings, of Mennonite communities."

⁶³ Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theatre, or Martyrs' Mirror, of the Defenceless Christians, Who Suffered and Were Put to Death for the Testimony of Jesus, Their Savior, from the Time of Christ until the Year A.D. 1660*, trans. I. Daniel Rupp (Lampeter Square, PA: David Miller, 1837).

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Toward An Apocalyptic Peace Church: Christian Pacifism *After* Hauerwas¹

Ry O. Siggelkow

Introduction

If Jeffrey Stout is right in claiming that Stanley Hauerwas is “surely the most prolific and influential theologian now working in the United States,”² then a theological evaluation of his work is important, even necessary. Hauerwas’s influence can be discerned in many facets of contemporary theology: in the continued prominence of the category of virtue in both Protestant theological ethics and Catholic moral theology, in the basic commitments of postliberalism, and in central aspects of Radical Orthodoxy. Less often noted is his influence on a generation of Mennonite theologians.³ Other than Hauerwas’s Mennonite students, however, many of the above movements do not share his commitment to pacifism. Or, at the very least, it is not a key component of these movements. This fact when considered by itself may be judged as merely incidental, but one cannot be blamed for second-guessing this judgment when the author of a recent book with the title *Just War as Christian Discipleship* claims that Hauerwas has been “particularly influential in the initiation” of his project.⁴ This essay intends to be an exercise in this sort of second-guessing. My point is not to engage in the long-standing debates between just war theorists and pacifists⁵ but to examine and offer a

¹ I am grateful to Kait Dugan, Halden Doerge, Beverly Gaventa, Craig Keen, and Nate Kerr for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

² Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004), 140.

³ In particular I have in mind Peter Dula, Chris Huebner, and Alex Sider, all of whom studied under Hauerwas at Duke University. But Mennonites have long been grappling with the implications of Hauerwas’s work. We may also include here the many Anabaptist-leaning pastors and churches that have been inspired in large part by Hauerwas’s theological voice, as well as the “neo-monasticism” movement and the ecumenical group Ekklesia Project. www.ekklesiaproject.org/

⁴ Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church rather than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009).

⁵ This essay assumes—perhaps not uncontroversially—that pacifism is essential to Christian

critique of the theology that shapes Hauerwas's pacifism, in order to clear the ground for alternative theological options and to gesture at a new direction for how we might think the church's peace witness after Hauerwas. In the first section of this essay I argue that while John Howard Yoder may have been the original impetus for Hauerwas's intellectual conversion to pacifism, the constructive theological account of pacifism that Hauerwas has since been developing may owe more to the insights he has gleaned from reading Alasdair MacIntyre and John Milbank.⁶ I contend that it is MacIntyre's understanding of tradition and practice, and Milbank's construal of peace as ontologically basic to the created order, that provide the framework for Hauerwas's "onto-ecclesiological" pacifism.

By onto-ecclesiology, I mean the attempt to ground the church theologically in terms of its metaphysical correspondence to the reality of Being. Formally, what I mean by this term is not unlike what Martin Heidegger decried as "onto-theology," namely the mode of thinking characteristic of western metaphysics that seeks to represent "the Being of beings"—the "totality of beings as such"—as ontologically grounded in and supremely manifested by a "supreme, all-founding being," namely *theion*, or "God."⁷ The main difference in this context is that Hauerwas has replaced *theion* with *ekklesia*. Indeed, it is the church's being—objectively given in its liturgical practices and institutional life—that is the "supreme manifestation" and the "all-founding" *logos* of the totality of beings as such. Onto-ecclesiology thus names simultaneously the *ontologization* of the church

discipleship. While I do not mean to limit potential conversation partners with this assumption, as a Mennonite, pacifism is central to a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Of course, the Mennonite confession of faith is subject to scripture and therefore always open to correction. Because of its centrality in the confession, however, I think it is justifiable to presuppose the assumption as normative here.

⁶ This is not to suggest that Yoder has had no lasting influence on Hauerwas, or that all the problematic elements of Hauerwas's theology stem from sources *other* than Yoder. Yoder is at times vulnerable to at least some of the critiques leveled against Hauerwas here. The primary aim of this essay is to expose the particular consequences of Hauerwas's appropriation of MacIntyre and Milbank, and to highlight how these are problematically played out in his account of Christian pacifism.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 70-71. Cf. Iain Thomson, "Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Metaphysics," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, no. 3 (2000): 297-327.

(the church understood as “the Being of beings”) and the *ecclesiologization* of being (“Being” in its *highest* and *fullest* sense, and meaning, for Hauerwas, is “being-in-the-church”). The upshot is that the being of the church is seen as embodying and performing in its institutional life, its habits and practices, that which corresponds to the “ontology of peace” that Milbank finds at the heart of the created order. From this point of view, and on this basis, we can fully come to understand what Hauerwas means when he says that “the church is what the world can be.”⁸

Once we grasp Hauerwas’s onto-ecclesiological framework we can better understand the deeply problematic character of his pacifism. For if the church is the embodiment of that “peace” which is identical to the ontological reality of the created order, then not only is “peace” rendered a predicate of what the church essentially is in its concrete form, but the work of the church becomes centrally preoccupied with preserving and maintaining—policing—the borders of its community. If the peace to which Christian pacifists witness is reducible to the perdurance of a specific cultural form, then the church’s mission to the world becomes a species of ecclesial propaganda.⁹ In such a framework, the peace to which the church is committed cannot help but function self-reflexively, in that its witness of peace becomes nothing other than a witness to its own life in which peace is an essential quality. Such an account not only misrepresents the “peace” to which the church witnesses, theologically; it misrepresents the violence that the world names, biblically.

Not only is Hauerwas not *yet* a pacifist, as Daniel Bell has provocatively suggested,¹⁰ but the onto-ecclesiology on which his pacifism is based betrays

⁸ Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), xiii. The concern is not that Hauerwas abstracts from the church’s particularity by subjecting it to a more general philosophical account of being. Precisely the opposite is the case. What he wants to do is subject every philosophical account of being to the reality that is *more* fundamental and *more* basic, namely that which is objectively given in the liturgical, cultural, and political form of the church community.

⁹ See John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 192. On this understanding of ecclesial propaganda, particularly in relation to Reinhard Hütter’s view of the “church as public,” see Flett, “Communion as Propaganda: Reinhard Hütter and the Missionary Witness of the ‘Church as Public,’” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62 (2009): 457–76.

¹⁰ Bell, “The Way of God with the World: Hauerwas on War,” in *Unsettling Arguments: A*

the violence attending what Yoder called “Constantinianism.” The church’s mission in Hauerwas’s account, while ostensibly nonviolent, is driven by the ultimate goal of *subsuming* or “engulfing” the world into its own “habitable culture.” Once this onto-ecclesiology basis is laid bare, we can make better sense of what is often dismissed as Hauerwas’s penchant for hyperbole, namely his claim to be a “theocrat”¹¹ and his admission that his work implies a “lingering longing” for Christendom.¹²

Given these concerns and critiques, the question prompting the constructive section of this essay is: What does a theology of Christian pacifism look like *after* Hauerwas? While only gesturing at a constructive alternative, I will insist that Christian pacifism today—perhaps especially pacifism of a Mennonite or Anabaptist stripe—must decisively break with Hauerwas’s onto-ecclesiology. By way of an alternative I will seek to re-situate “peace” and “violence” and “church” and “world” within the conceptuality of Pauline apocalyptic. From that perspective I argue against Hauerwas that “peace” is not what is secured through the propagation, inculturation, and habituation into the culture and peaceable ontology which the church names, but is the event by which God overthrows the violent powers of Sin and Death in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Drawing on the work of J. Louis Martyn, I argue that peace, from Paul’s perspective, is not an ontological production of “the church” or “the world” but an operation of God’s action in Christ to liberate creation from enslavement to the *stoicheia tou kosmou* (“the elements of the cosmos”).

Contextualizing Hauerwas’s Theology and Pacifism

While Yoder deeply influences Hauerwas’s pacifism, it is crucial to

Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas’s 70th Birthday, ed. Charles R. Pinches, Kelly S. Johnson, and Charles M. Collier (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 112-33.

¹¹ Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles, *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations between a Radical Democrat and a Christian* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2008), 22.

¹² See Hauerwas, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2000), 227 n. 39. Douglas Harink notes that “At the 1999 meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics, Hauerwas, in positioning himself vis-à-vis John Howard Yoder, declared, ‘I am much more Catholic, more Constantinian, than John.’” Douglas Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 102.

contextualize Hauerwas's theology in order to discern how Hauerwas's appropriation of MacIntyre and Milbank marks a significant departure from Yoder. This is important both for "unhinging" Yoder from Hauerwas and for evaluating the latter's theology and pacifism on its own terms. It is often assumed that Hauerwas's project is more or less a faithful rendering and extension of Yoder's conception of Christian pacifism and his understanding of Jesus and the church.¹³ Hauerwas is mostly to blame for the prevalence of this assumption, for he often suggests his work is but a "modest statement of a position that has been articulated by people like John Howard Yoder for years."¹⁴ Indeed, not only is Yoder's work instrumental for his commitment to pacifism, but Hauerwas thinks he has found in Yoder a conception of the church's ethico-political witness that moves beyond the static church-world binaries set up by Ernst Troeltsch and exacerbated by Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. Notwithstanding Yoder's important influence on Hauerwas, there is more going on in the latter's theology that must be teased out and contextualized for an adequate presentation of his work and what frames his pacifism.

Hauerwas's theology, including the shape of his account of Christian pacifism, is formed out of a complex matrix of influences. It was through Yale-school postliberalism, and indirectly a particular reading of Wittgenstein,¹⁵

¹³ Some clarification has been made. For an exceptional essay highlighting their theological differences, see Gerald W. Schlabach, "Continuity and Sacrament, or Not: Hauerwas, Yoder, and Their Deep Difference," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2007): 171-207; see also Paul Doerksen, "Share the House: Yoder and Hauerwas Among the Nations" and Craig R. Hovey, "The Public Ethics of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas: Difference or Disagreement?," both in *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz, (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2004), 187-204 and 205-20. See also Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 128-33.

¹⁴ Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 51. See also Hauerwas and Chris Huebner, "History, Theory, and Anabaptism: A Conversation on Theology after John Howard Yoder," in *Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Chris Huebner, Harry Huebner, and Mark Thiessen Nation, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 391-408; Hauerwas, "Foreword" to Craig Carter, *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001).

¹⁵ I have in mind especially the influence of George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*

that Hauerwas first became preoccupied with articulating an account of the Christian ethical life as constituted by a set of practices, liturgically and culturally construed. These influences led him to develop his account of character and sanctification as constitutive of the continuity of the Christian ethical life over time.¹⁶ Moreover, the language of practices and sanctification connected well with his interest in a retrieval of the virtue tradition. The effect was that Hauerwas distanced himself from not only the 19th-century liberal Protestantism against which Barth and postliberals reacted, but also the dominant trends in Protestant theology and ethics more generally. Already in his doctoral dissertation Hauerwas sought to connect the Wesleyan and Calvinist doctrines of sanctification with the virtue tradition of Aquinas and Aristotle.¹⁷

Hauerwas's effort to retrieve the Thomistic virtue tradition in conversation with the doctrine of sanctification in Protestant theology, however, took on a new shape in light of MacIntyre's *After Virtue*.¹⁸ Not only did MacIntyre share a concern to retrieve the virtue tradition, he supplied a provocative articulation of the philosophical roots of the problems endemic to ethical discourse in modern liberal societies.¹⁹ Ten years later, John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* provided more grist for Hauerwas's anti-liberal mill and came packaged with an "ontology of peace."²⁰ What is needed according to MacIntyre is a new St. Benedict; what is needed

(Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) and *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). While Hauerwas rarely engages Wittgenstein directly, he does express his indebtedness at times. See Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983), xxi. Here, he expresses his indebtedness to his then Notre Dame colleague David Burrell in particular. For the recent use of Wittgenstein in theology with Hauerwas in mind, see Peter Dula, "Wittgenstein among the Theologians," in *Unsettling Arguments: A Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas's 70th Birthday*, 3-24.

¹⁶ Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1994); originally published in 1975 with Trinity University Press.

¹⁷ Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life* and *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

¹⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

¹⁹ For a discussion of MacIntyre's influence on Hauerwas, see Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 144-47.

²⁰ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

according to Milbank is a new Henri de Lubac or perhaps a Maurice Blondel. Both books lament the demise of traditional forms of Christianity and locate the beginning of this demise in the supposed late-medieval intellectual roots of the Protestant Reformation. While their proposed solutions to the acids of modernity may significantly differ, both writers sought a “radical” retrieval of their own particular conceptions of traditional Christian orthodoxy, and a rehabilitation of a properly “catholic” ecclesiological vision that would relocate “the Church” as the true *polis* over and against which the modern secular nation-state and secular socio-political theory had asserted itself.²¹

Tradition-constituted Ecclesiology: Hauerwas’s MacIntyrianism

While Hauerwas had learned from Yoder that a Christian ethic arises not out of the foundation of universal and ahistorical ideals but out of the particularity of Jesus’ life-history, MacIntyre helped Hauerwas see that “to abandon the search for a ‘foundation’ does not necessarily entail the loss of rationality in ethics.”²² Thus Hauerwas adopts MacIntyre’s description and commentary on the modern fragmented world always teetering on the edge of violence, and concludes: “Lacking any habits or institutions sufficient to sustain an ethos of honor, we become cynical. . . . Yet, cynicism inevitably proves too corrosive. Its acid finally poisons the self, leaving no basis for self-respect because it renders all activities unworthy of our moral commitment.”²³ The response to such a fragmented world, says Hauerwas, is not to formulate a universal ethic that transcends all particularities but, following MacIntyre, to accept that all ethics is constituted by traditions of moral inquiry formed over time. Every ethic has a traditioned qualifier—and for Christians, it is the peaceable church community expressed narratively through history.

MacIntyre helped Hauerwas realize that there is “no standing ground, no place for inquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other.”²⁴ The particularity that the

²¹ Important in this regard is the work of Hauerwas’s student William Cavanaugh and his critique of the modern nation state. See William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (New York: T&T Clark, 2002).

²² Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, xxv.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁴ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press,

qualifier “Christian” names in Christian ethics is not only the singular life-history of Jesus Christ that Yoder had insisted on but the particularity of the Christian *tradition* as it develops over time. As MacIntyre famously defines it,

A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about what goods which constitute that tradition. Within a tradition the pursuit of goods extends through generations, sometimes through many generations. Hence the individual’s search for his or her good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual’s life is a part, and this is true both of those goods which are internal to practices and of the goods of a single life.²⁵

The ethical “rationality” and “truth” of Christian convictions in this framework are not adequately described as non-foundational but as *self*-foundational. When MacIntyre’s notion of tradition is applied to ecclesiology, as it is in Hauerwas, the outcome is a self-foundational ecclesiology—a church without any openness to a “truth” or “foundation” outside itself. In order for Hauerwas to sustain this account of tradition theologically, he comes to think of the church community as the epistemological and ontological *precondition* for Jesus himself. So he will say “there is no Jesus without the church.”²⁶

To see how this plays out concretely in his discussion of Christian pacifism, consider the essay, “Can Christians think about War?” in which Hauerwas asserts that though he initially came to be a pacifist “for intellectual reasons” his position is ambiguous, for any “compelling account of nonviolence *requires* the narrative display of practices of a community that has learned to embody nonviolence in its everyday practices.”²⁷ Clearly he wants to distance himself from any account of nonviolence dependent upon a “position” or “theory,” in favor of one that is a “set of convictions and

1988), 350.

²⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222.

²⁶ Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1994), 120.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 117; italics added.

corresponding practices of a particular kind of people.”²⁸ While he expresses his dependence on Yoder’s account of nonviolence as set forth in *The Politics of Jesus*, he departs from Yoder’s “biblical realism” in this essay, convinced that “the text of the Bible in and of itself” does *not* require pacifism.²⁹ Rather, as he puts it, “only a church that is nonviolent is capable” of coming to this reading of the biblical text.³⁰ Moreover, it is “exactly that society [the church] that makes nonviolence possible.”

Against Reinhold Niebuhr and much of modern Christian social ethics, Hauerwas says we must refuse to “separate Jesus from the church.”³¹ The problem with Niebuhr and theologians such as Paul Ramsey is that they separate Christology from ecclesiology and thus “lack any sense that nonviolence is one of the characteristics of a historical community.”³² What is problematic here, as Nathan Kerr has observed, is not so much Hauerwas’s insistence on the inseparability of Christology and ecclesiology but on “privileging the church itself as *subject* and *agent* of the Christ-story, such that it is the church’s own narrative history that constitutes the ‘storied’ identity of Jesus.”³³

Significantly, none of this means, for Hauerwas, that Christian pacifists cannot enter into dialogue with just war theorists. For such a conversation to bear fruit, however, “depends on its ability to draw on communal practices such as forgiveness and reconciliation, which are at the heart of nonviolence.”³⁴ Notice the priority given to “communal practices” of the church as the source from which such a conversation must spring if it is to have any hope. The conversation does not depend so much on the singular life-history of Jesus of Nazareth as witnessed to in scripture, as it did for Yoder, but on the community’s practices that help us to read scripture rightly. Such an account stems from Hauerwas’s commitment that “there is

²⁸ Ibid., 120.

²⁹ For an explication of Yoder’s “biblical realism,” see John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, ed. Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 309-20.

³⁰ Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front*, 118.

³¹ Ibid., 121.

³² Ibid., 130.

³³ Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic*, 106.

³⁴ Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front*, 123.

no Jesus without the church” and that the church is itself “the story [of Jesus] being told,” for “the teller and the tale are one.”³⁵

Ontological Peaceableness: Hauerwas’s Milbankianism

For all of Hauerwas’s emphasis on the *priority* of the church and especially the *particularity* of the church’s claims, Kerr correctly observes that his ecclesiology “harbors a pretension to universality, which is inimical to the ‘vulnerability of the particular’ that Yoder believes the church has committed itself to in its own ‘evangelical Christology.’”³⁶ This pretension to universality is, I contend, at least partly drawn from the work of John Milbank. In “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Nonviolence: A Milbankian Reflection,”³⁷ Hauerwas responds to Robert Jenson’s forceful critique that his rejection of foundational accounts of knowledge means Christians “must abandon all attempts to claim Christian beliefs as true.” Jenson’s question is worth quoting at length:

Can Hauerwas’s thinking finally sustain its own central claim, that the church is the world’s salvation? The church cannot save the world in any of the ways the liberal church tries, and Hauerwas rightly rubs our noses in this plain fact. But *how* then is the church the world’s salvation? The student has a point: every claim to speak truth does indeed exercise something that might plausibly be called ‘violence,’ if we so choose to use the language.

³⁵ Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1988), 54. In this context we should read Daniel Bell’s comments quoted above regarding Hauerwas’s inspiration of *Just War as Christian Discipleship*. It is the Christian tradition as constituted by concrete practices that Bell takes as the primary starting point for any conversation about Christian participation in war. In his account the church’s reading of the scriptural texts as it is shaped by its concrete practices throughout history takes on special prominence. Bell’s book can rightly be seen as the outworking of key Hauerwasian insights. See Ry O. Siggelkow, “Just War is *Not* Christian Discipleship,” *The Other Journal* 17 (May 2010): <http://theotherjournal.com/2010/05/04/just-war-is-not-christian-discipleship-a-review-of-daniel-bell-jr-s-just-war/>

³⁶ Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic*, 115. For Yoder’s discussion of this point, see Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 44, 61.

³⁷ Hauerwas, “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Nonviolence: A Milbankian Reflection,” in *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 188-98.

If Hauerwas accepts this usage of ‘violence,’ he must abandon also witness as what the church can do for the world. It seems, indeed, he must end with a doctrine that the church saves the world simply by silently existing. Now even such a doctrine may be sustainable, but only by a lot more speculative systematic theology than Hauerwas seems willing to countenance.³⁸

This question highlights the problems attending Hauerwas’s ecclesiological appropriation of MacIntyre’s account of tradition. If the church’s particularity is conceived in this way, it seems to foreclose on the universality of the biblical call to mission in the world. Jenson does not so much question Hauerwas’s central claim, namely “that the church is the world’s salvation,” for as Peter Kline has shown, this is precisely the position Jenson holds.³⁹ Rather, he asks whether Hauerwas’s emphasis on the irreducible particularity of the church’s claims to truth does not ultimately lead to a kind of “silence” before the world that amounts to a kind of missionary failure.

What is interesting here is how Hauerwas attempts to respond to Jenson’s criticisms. What is required, he says, is the “display of material theological claims I believe Milbank has begun in *Theology and Social Theory*.” Milbank “provides the theological resources necessary for appeal to truth without those appeals embodying, or at least underwriting, the false universalism of secular epistemologies.”⁴⁰ Milbank helpfully supplies an explication of “the metaphysics of nonviolent creation in the hopes of providing a counter ontology to the pervasive metaphysics of violence embedded in Christian and non-Christian discourse.”⁴¹ Milbank’s ontological account of creation as essentially nonviolent contrasts with both “the Greeks” and liberalism’s assumption that existence is essentially “agonistic.” In this “counter ontology” Christians come to see that violence

³⁸ Robert Jenson, review of Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom? First Things* 25 (August / September, 1992). Quoted in Hauerwas, “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Nonviolence,” 189.

³⁹ Peter Kline, “Participation in God and the Nature of Christian Community: Robert Jenson and Eberhard Jüngel,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 1 (January 2011): 38-61.

⁴⁰ Hauerwas, “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Nonviolence,” 189.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 189-90.

is always a “secondary willed intrusion” known as such “only because of a profounder peace.”⁴² A Christian ontology of peace is neither hegemonic nor totalizing, “since God’s creation is the ongoing actualization of a sociality of harmonious difference displayed in the Trinity.”⁴³

By exposing the fact that liberalism’s false universalism depends on an “ontology of violence,” Milbank is able “to force the ‘secular’ to acknowledge its own contingency” and thereby open up a space for a different narration of existence, namely a properly Christian construal of ontology rooted in the Triune God. While Milbank does not allow for appeals to a foundational account of rationality, his suggestion that Christians can “out-narrate liberalism” helps to remind us that “truthful witness” *requires* “narrative display.” What is especially praiseworthy about this ontology, for Hauerwas, is its non-speculative character, because Milbank is committed to the theological conviction that through Christ we come to learn “the fundamental ontological claim that must shape all other claims.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, Milbank’s commitment to the requirement of “narrative display” accords with Hauerwas’s own understanding of the inseparability of Christology and ecclesiology. He quotes Milbank approvingly, when the latter says that

[T]he Church stands in a narrative relationship to Jesus and the Gospels, within a story that subsumes both. This must be the case, because no *historical* story is ever over and done with. Furthermore, the New Testament itself does not preach any denial of historicity, or any disappearance of our own personalities into the monistic truth of Christ. . . . Salvation is available for us after Christ because we can be incorporated in the community which he founded . . . The association of the Church . . . shows that the new community belongs from the beginning within the new narrative manifestation of God. Hence the metanarrative is *not* just a story of Jesus, it is the continuing story of the Church, already realized in a finally exemplary way by Christ, yet still to be realized universally, in harmony with

⁴² Ibid., 190.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 191.

Christ and yet *differently*, by all generations of Christians.⁴⁵

Not only does Milbank challenge and out-narrate liberalism, he understands the church as the community that “ultimately interprets and locates all other histories.”⁴⁶ Thus Hauerwas can say that the alternative history the church names is an “ontological necessity” for both the display of God’s story and Jesus’ identity.⁴⁷ The particular life-history of Jesus is construed here as a “yet still to be realized” universal. Jesus himself is situated within a *teleological* process whereby God is made manifest narratively and universally in the “association of the Church.” Indeed, the world’s salvation itself depends upon the church’s ability to display this story narratively in its practices, for it is “through the church . . . the world is given a history.”⁴⁸

Hauerwas’s Onto-ecclesiological Pacifism

Whether Jenson would find Hauerwas’s response compelling is not the issue here. The response is helpful because it illuminates how Hauerwas conceives the “peace” that the church names and how it relates to the church’s mission. The peace of the church is not a “position,” as Hauerwas insists, but the fundamental reality—the ontological reality—of creation as such, which is only known and made manifest concretely through the narratively displayed practices of the church community. Indeed, peace is not only a possession of the church; the manifestation of peace depends upon the church for its ontological display in the world. Only in the church community can we learn what the peace of creation essentially entails.

We can now see more clearly how Hauerwas’s ecclesiological appropriation of MacIntyre’s account of tradition and practice, and of Milbank’s ontology of peace, render his view of the church as *onto-ecclesiological*. In MacIntyre he finds the resources to think the particularity of the gospel and its continuity over time as displayed through the particularities of the church’s tradition and practices. Hauerwas can make this move theologically by emphasizing the inseparability of Christology

⁴⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 193. Quoted in Hauerwas, “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Nonviolence,” 192-93.

⁴⁶ Hauerwas, “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Nonviolence,” 193.

⁴⁷ Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 60-61.

⁴⁸ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 91.

and ecclesiology as a way of recovering the political visibility of the church's witness. But Jenson's question that this account risks a certain "violence" if it is not left in a kind of missionary "silence" moves Hauerwas to adopt Milbank's ontology, which supplies the universal element lacking in MacIntyre's account.

What is especially helpful about Milbank's universalism, for Hauerwas, is the appeal to an ontology naming the ultimate reality of the world while not losing the ecclesiological particularity that he wants to maintain. Thus, by wedding MacIntyre with Milbank he can think the church's tradition and practices as corresponding to what is ontologically basic to creation. That creation is ontologically constituted in this way, however, cannot be known apart from the church community. Thus, incorporation into that community becomes a *prerequisite* to seeing the world not only as ontologically peaceable in this way but as the medium by which the world *becomes*, teleologically speaking, what it is made to be: ontologically peaceable. Such peaceableness is difficult and "hard won," as Hauerwas will say, not because it lies outside the church's institutional reality but because it requires habituation into the virtue of peace made possible by its liturgical and ethical practices. The church's mission to *ecclesiologize* the world is not, however, discontinuous with the world's own created reality—it is rather that to which the world is *teleologically* oriented. So, again we can better understand what Hauerwas means when he says "the church is what the world can be," for the church just *is* the ontological constitution of the world's *telos*. Significantly, such ontological constitution is not *hidden*; it is directly and objectively given in the church's visible life, precisely in its ethical, political, and cultural distinctiveness.⁴⁹

Hauerwas, Yoder, and Constantinianism

In this light, we can see how the church's witness of "peace," for Hauerwas, becomes fundamentally a matter of the church's *survival* made possible by way of the preservation, maintenance, and policing of the borders of the church body. Such maintenance is critical precisely because the

⁴⁹ For this emphasis on the church as irreducibly "visible," see Hauerwas, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Political Theology," in *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 33-54.

church's *mission* is oriented around reminding the world of its primordial constitution, ontologically construed. Yet, this reminder is significant not because the world has resources in itself to become what it is made to be; rather the church exists to show the world that its final *telos*, its salvation, comes only as it is incorporated into the life of the church community. Thus, the church's witness of "peace" cannot remain "silent," for there is a fundamental imperative for the church to live out its mission for the sake of the world's future. If this mission is devoted to ecclesilogizing the world, then what Hauerwas provides in the end is a conception of the church that aligns almost perfectly with what Yoder has called "Constantinianism."

Remarkably, Gerald Schlabach has observed that Hauerwas's theology becomes "quite consistent" once we realize that "he *does* want to create a Christian society (*polis, societas*)—a community and way of life shaped fully by Christian convictions."⁵⁰ Douglas Harink agrees with Schlabach's reading and sees it affirmed in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Following Hauerwas and Paul, he writes that "[t]he church's universal mission is therefore to bear testimony to the faithful Jesus Christ through its own cruciform, nonviolent life among the nations—a nonviolent, ecclesial *Constantinianism* that has no other goal than the conversion of all nations, by publicly exhibiting before them the crucified Jesus Christ."⁵¹ It is to that mission that Hauerwas "has committed himself as a 'nonviolent terrorist.'"⁵²

To support his claim, Harink quotes Hauerwas approvingly: "The issue is not whether Christian claims are imperial, but what institutional form that takes. If one believes as I do that the church rules nonviolently, I think the questions of 'imperialism' are put in quite a different context."⁵³ Harink interprets that passage this way: "The *ekklesia* is the institutional form of an appropriate Christian imperialism that seeks to conquer the world through the nonviolent politics of the cross rather than the sword."⁵⁴ According to Harink, "Not only does that sum up Hauerwas's response to sectarian tribalism; it sums up the message and driving motivation of Paul's

⁵⁰ Quoted in Hauerwas, *A Better Hope*, 44.

⁵¹ Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals*, 103; italics added.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

apostolic mission to the nations.”⁵⁵

While Hauerwas may adopt certain aspects of Yoder’s critique of Constantinianism, especially his rejection of the church aligning its “politics” according to a given party, nation-state, empire, or government, we might say that he actually departs from the fundamental point of Yoder’s critique. His appropriation of MacIntyre and Milbank has led to the development of an onto-ecclesiological construal of the Christian peace witness, and thereby to a departure from Yoder. Because it is often assumed that Hauerwas’s pacifism is nothing but a faithful extension of Yoder’s theology, I want to show how Hauerwas nevertheless falls prey to Yoder’s critique of Constantinianism.⁵⁶

For Yoder, the problem with Constantinianism lies first in the compulsiveness that Christians have to control the world, to move history in the “right direction.” One of the central theses of *The Politics of Jesus* is that what Jesus renounced “is not first of all *violence*, but rather this compulsiveness of purpose.”⁵⁷ The logic of Constantinianism is present whenever disciples are “drawn away from the faithfulness of service” and singleness of mind, and are “drawn into the twofold pride of thinking that we, more than others, see things as they really are and of claiming the duty and the power to coerce others in order to move history aright.”⁵⁸ In Yoder’s view, “if our faithfulness is to be guided by the kind of man Jesus was, it must cease to be guided by the quest to have dominion over the course of events.”⁵⁹ The non-Constantinian church is one constituted in mission precisely by *giving up* on the idea that the world must come out right, especially the idea that the world is to be subsumed into the church.

While my primary interest has been to show the particular consequences of Hauerwas’s appropriation of MacIntyre and Milbank, I also want to suggest that Hauerwas misappropriates Yoder’s thought, as in the Gifford Lectures, which take as their theme Yoder’s claim that “people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe.”⁶⁰ Hauerwas

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ On this assumption, see the concluding remarks of this section.

⁵⁷ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 237; italics added.

⁵⁸ Yoder, “Christ, the Hope of the World,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael Cartwright (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1998), 203.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Yoder, “Armaments and Eschatology,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1, no. 1 (1988): 58.

appropriates this quotation to bolster his own onto-ecclesiological project when he says that “the God we worship and the world God created cannot be truthfully known without the cross, which is why the knowledge of God and ecclesiology—or the politics called church—are interdependent.”⁶¹

While Yoder would agree that “the grain of the universe” can only be known when one shares “in the life of those who sing about the Resurrection of the slain Lamb,” his point is not primarily ecclesiological, nor is it to insist on how knowledge of God and ecclesiology are somehow “interdependent.” Knowledge of God, for Yoder, is rooted strictly in the subject matter of the church’s song, namely the resurrection of the slain Lamb. He is indeed making an epistemological point against theological accounts that would claim knowledge of God derives from “nature,” but he does not thereby intend to turn “ecclesiology” or “the church” into that set of habits and practices by which one gains privileged access to knowledge of God and the world. His point is actually *christological*: it is only on the basis of God’s self-revelation in the cross and resurrection of Christ that we learn what it means to be human before God and for God to be God. Yoder refuses to subsume Christ into the church, a refusal stemming precisely from his radical Protestant convictions. Indeed, the radical Protestant “difference” is that the church relies wholly and strictly on the Spirit of God in every situation or dilemma, and not on the continuity of its traditions, practices, habits, virtues, or the certainty that its form of life alone exhibits the peace of Christ.⁶²

For Yoder, the church is not to be oriented around the preservation and maintenance of its own form of life, but is rather to be shaped by radical kenotic solidarity with the world, for “if *kenosis* is the shape of God’s own self-sending, then any strategy of Lordship, like that of the kings of this world, is not only a strategic mistake likely to backfire but a denial of gospel substance, a denial which has failed even where it succeeded.”⁶³ The church therefore is called to “deconstantinize” and “disestablish” itself, to reject not only *violence* but the “compulsiveness of purpose that leads the strong to

⁶¹ Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 17.

⁶² See Yoder, “Anabaptism and History,” in *The Priestly Kingdom*, 123–34.

⁶³ Yoder, “The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics,” in *The Priestly Kingdom*, 145.

violate the dignity of others.”⁶⁴ The church does this because it is “the Lord of history and God’s Holy Spirit, not our eloquence or artistic creativity, which will make of our sign a message.”⁶⁵ Even in a world dominated by wars and rumors of wars, “our Lord Christ is not thereby shut out of that world.” For Christ is “able to overrule even [this world’s] brutality so as to ‘make the wrath of men praise him.’”⁶⁶ Contrary to Hauerwas, then, the call to the non-Constantinian church is the *refusal* to ecclesiologize the world, for this is to replicate the logic of self-concern proper to the “powers” enslaving the world. Instead, the call is to follow Christ as Lord of history in “the self-giving way of love by which all the nations will one day be judged.”⁶⁷

It may be objected that Yoder has more in common with Hauerwas on some of these points than I admit. The recent renaissance in the study of Yoder has led some to insist on the difference and the distance between Hauerwas and Yoder; and while this essay seeks to contribute in some small way to this growing body of scholarship, that alone is not its primary purpose. Getting Yoder “right” is not the primary task of theological reflection, not even Anabaptist theological reflection. To distance Yoder’s theology from Hauerwas does not necessarily get one any closer to either a more faithful articulation of the Anabaptist peace witness or the message of the gospel. Indeed, Yoder himself at times departs from his own best insights. Just as I deployed Yoder against Hauerwas in the preceding pages, it is important to deploy Yoder against himself. Despite rejecting the natural law tradition and the “orders of creation” in favor of a perspective focused irreducibly on the singular historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, he does suggest that Christ and the church “run with the grain of the universe.” This seems to imply not only that he thinks along the lines of “immanence,” as Daniel Barber has provocatively suggested,⁶⁸ but even more problematically that God’s apocalypse in Christ is a confirmation of “nature” or “the order of things.” For Yoder, this is not a way to affirm the status quo but to stress how, despite the powers of Sin and Death, the world nevertheless exhibits movements “from below” that reflect

⁶⁴ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 237.

⁶⁵ Yoder, “Christ, the Hope of the World,” 204.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 217-18.

⁶⁸ See especially Daniel Barber, “Immanence and Creation,” *Political Theology* 10, no. 1 (2009): 131-41.

the way the world really is. Usually, for him, this is a manner of speaking in what Karl Barth called “secular parables,” events in human history that are parabolic of the kingdom to come. However, for Barth, these parables are eschatological events reflecting a movement of God’s Spirit from beyond, not some primordial “given” always lying within, behind, or before the world enslaved to the powers of Sin and Death.

Toward an Apocalyptic Peace Church: Undoing Onto-ecclesiology

I have sought to highlight the onto-ecclesiological basis of Hauerwas’s Christian pacifism and to show how such a view cannot help but re-instantiate a Constantinian conception of the church. By way of a theological alternative, the account of Christian pacifism sketched below depends upon, and extends, the recent retrieval of an “apocalyptic” mode of theology and ethics.⁶⁹ As employed here, “apocalyptic” signifies first and foremost God’s invasion into the world in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. From an apocalyptic perspective, God’s revelation (*apocalypsis*) in Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection is neither an “unveiling” of a once hidden ontological primordially nor a disclosure of an originary ontological peaceableness. God’s apocalypse is rather an *action* by which the powers that produce and sustain this world’s presumed “ontologies of peace” are exposed as fundamentally violent in their promoting an illusory peaceable order.⁷⁰ Just as it is not an unveiling, God’s apocalyptic action in Christ is also not the mode by which this world’s *ontos* is “perfected” according to an ecclesial, ethical, or political ideal.⁷¹ Instead, it is nothing less than the

⁶⁹ “Apocalyptic” is a slippery term. Likewise, talk of “apocalyptic theology” as suggesting a kind of unified theological front does little to clarify matters. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find any sort of unified theological front. For my part, I seek to extend the tradition of biblical exegesis and theology best represented by Ernst Käsemann, Paul Lehmann, J. Louis Martyn, Christopher Morse, Nancy Duff, Beverly Gaventa, James F. Kay, and Fleming Rutledge. More recently, David Congdon, Halden Doerge, Nathan R. Kerr, and Philip G. Ziegler have made significant contributions to this still ongoing conversation. For a volume bringing together a diversity of voices and reflecting the current conversation, see Douglas Harink and Josh Davis, eds., *The Future of Apocalyptic Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012).

⁷⁰ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 99.

⁷¹ I am indebted to Nicholas Healy’s criticisms of the idealistic character of Hauerwas’s ecclesiology and more generally his cautionary remarks about what he calls the “new

passing away of the *ontos* of this world, the destruction and overthrow of the violent *onto*-logic of the powers of Sin and Death that radically enslave creation. Apocalyptic thus forecloses on all onto-ecclesiological construals of Christian pacifism in refusing to lay claim and secure “peace” by way of an ecclesiological alignment with this world’s *ontos*. In short, it is the refusal of what Yoder called the “ontocratic” logic at the heart of the just war tradition, namely the presumption that God’s peace is equivalent to “the way things are.”⁷²

In his commentary on Galatians, J. Louis Martyn argues that Paul’s theology works within an apocalyptic schema of “before” and “after.” *Before* the sending of Christ and the Spirit the world was enslaved by pairs of opposites (Jew/Greek; Circumcision/Uncircumcision; Slave/Free; Male/Female; Law/Not-Law) produced by *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* (“the elements of the cosmos”); *after* Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection these pairs have been decisively overcome and a new pair (the apocalyptic antinomy of the Spirit and the Flesh) has been born out of God’s invasive event. These two opposed powers, the Spirit and the Flesh, are now engaged in militant warfare.⁷³ In Christ the *turning of the ages* has occurred and as a consequence humanity finds itself in “hotly contested territory, a place of jungle warfare in which battles precipitated by the powers of the new creation are sometimes

ecclesiology.” See Nicholas M. Healy, “Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, no. 3 (November 2003): 287-303.

⁷² For Yoder, the Augustinian mistake as regards war and peace is to merge the gospel’s language of reconciliation with the classical Roman language of peace and order “as if they were all the same thing.” In this form of thinking, “Rome, nature, and providence are all seen as essentially the same. Religion celebrates the unity of everything and the way things are.” The logic of such ontocracy assumes that “things are ruled by the way they are.” The problem with ontocracy is that it assumes that “God is the God of the way things are, the God of nature.” Thus, “if the world is Christian, that is the way it should be.” It is this “commonsense logic” that underlies the just war tradition. The crucifixion of Christ exposes the reality that the *ontos* of this world exhibits a peace built on violence and death-dealing, for this *ontos* is itself the operation of the anti-God powers of Sin and Death. See Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, ed. Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 63.

⁷³ Martyn argues that, for Paul, this new apocalyptic antinomy does not *inhere* in the cosmos as such—as in the theology of Qumran (e.g., 1QS 3:13-4:26)—but has begun only *since* the advent of Christ and the Spirit. Martyn, *Galatians*, 101.

won and sometimes lost.”⁷⁴ Paul is confident that there is true freedom in the present (Gal. 5:1) while maintaining an unwavering realism about the war that lies ahead. The victory has been accomplished once and for all in Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, and yet the present time is a *battle* and a *struggle*—a time of *waiting* and *groaning* for God’s coming new creation—in which discipleship takes the form of following after Christ in the mode of resistance against the powers under the sign of his crucifixion.⁷⁵

Following Martyn, I suggest that, for Paul, what is overcome in God’s victory over the *stoicheia tou kosmou* is the *power* of the violence that is the *ontos* of this world. Hence the violence of the powers is most fundamentally an *ontological* operation. Under the powers, this world is invariably locked in pairs of opposites that violently oppress by way of their dialectical determination of what “is” over and against what “is not.” For Paul, God’s peace is finally not a matter of “being” or “having” at all;⁷⁶ indeed, the reason Christian pacifism cannot lay claim to God’s peace is that peace is an event of this world’s passing away. Peace, apocalyptically inflected, is nothing less than God’s victory over the anti-God powers of Sin and Death whose *modus operandi* is to violently pose in the form of a false *ontos* of peace. Apocalyptic thus says a radical No! to a “peace” determined by Sin and Death, and a radical Yes! to “the God of peace who will soon crush Satan under his feet” (Rom. 16:20). It proclaims the liberation of God’s creation *from* the grip of the powers and *for* the coming of God’s reign of peace. The upshot is that peace, apocalyptically construed, is not a possibility of this world—it is not an immanent production—but an event by which this world’s *ontos* is exposed as violent, and its power and rule over creation is *undone*. To borrow

⁷⁴ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁵ As Ernst Käsemann rightly insisted, the glory of Christ’s victory over the powers of Sin and Death is *hidden* under the sign of the crucifixion. Discipleship consists not in ecclesial triumphalism but in the willingness to take up the cross after Christ. “The theology of the resurrection is a chapter in the theology of the cross, not the excelling of it.” In their earthly life Christians are not *transferred* from this crucifying world into the world of the resurrection but drawn, in *freedom*, more deeply into the depths of its suffering. The peace of the resurrection is given to us in the mode of promise, expectation, and hope, under the sign of the cross. See Ernst Käsemann, “The Saving Significance of Jesus’s Death,” in *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 59.

⁷⁶ See Käsemann, “Corporeality in Paul,” in *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene*, ed. Rudolf Landau; trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 48–49.

from Christopher Morse, God's apocalyptic peace is what happens when the form of this world passes away and the kingdom of heaven comes to pass.⁷⁷

Peace is thus not immanent to the church's life, its traditioned practices, whether "divinely-instituted" liturgical practices or its more mundane ones.⁷⁸ The church does not make peace a possibility in this world of violence, a world that runs through the very heart of the church community itself. The church is not set apart in a sort of holy innocence. On the contrary, it is that piece of the world which confesses that peace is *alone* God's victory over the violent powers of Sin and Death. Peace is the overcoming of the *ontos* of this world. Yet as a piece of this world, the church too must continually repent for the blood on its hands, for its continual betrayal of God's peace in Christ. It must repent for how such betrayal is exhibited, not only in its participation in war-making and empire-building but in the ways its own life is structured according to the very *ontos* of a world that has been crucified in Christ and is passing away.

To repent means to unmask the ways the church is complicit in the violence of this world that occurs in the name of "peace," and to turn toward Christ in conformity to his suffering and crucifixion. Since apocalyptic peace comes only from *beyond* as an action of God, pacifism is not a possibility of this world at all.⁷⁹ Peace is not latent in the world and thus cannot be secured, cultivated, or policed, only received ever anew in prayerful obedience to the God who meets us from beyond as the one crucified under the false "peace" of this world's *ontos*. Insofar as this world remains bound to the powers of Sin and Death, the church also remains bound up in violence. Christian pacifism is thus not the ethical refusal of violence but the confession that

⁷⁷ For this phraseology, see Christopher Morse, *The Difference Heaven Makes* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

⁷⁸ "The freedom of the church is not where it has possibilities, but only where the gospel is truly effective in its own power to create space for itself on earth, even and especially when there are no such possibilities for the church"—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground: 1937-1940* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 448-49.

⁷⁹ See Paul Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 264-66. From an apocalyptic perspective, God's action is always revolutionary inasmuch as the coming kingdom of God is that new order which inevitably breaks up the established order. When Lehmann speaks of revolution as the sign of God's kingdom on its way, he does not "justify" violence, but instead points to the inevitable consequence when God's power confronts the established powers that enslave the world.

God's peace occurs in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, an event by which God proves victorious over the violent powers enslaving the world.

Such peace is as visible as the wounds of Christ's crucified body crushed under the weight of these violent powers. The church witnesses to God's peace in proclaiming that in this crucified body God "disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). The church's work of peace is to proclaim this news in word and deed by freely giving its life away in cruciform solidarity with everyone crushed under the weight of the violent *ontos* of this world's "peace." From there, among those who "are not" according to that *ontos*, Christ as Lord by the power of the Spirit is at work *against* every power, principality, and ontological machination that would foreclose on the freedom and liberation of all creation. The peace church is given to live in the manner by which Christ emptied himself and became a servant for all (Phil. 2:5-11). This is so because the apocalyptic peace to which the church witnesses just *is* Jesus Christ, the one who "is not" for our sake—the one with no borders to police, no property to defend, and no identity to produce and maintain.

Conclusion

These tentative notes toward an apocalyptic peace church—a theology of pacifism *after* Hauerwas—hardly make possible the kind of potent ecclesiology and robust ontology that he and others would require for sustaining a peaceable kingdom over time. Yet if in his "onto-ecclesiology" we have indeed crossed over the threshold of a renewed, unprecedented form of "ecclesiological fundamentalism,"⁸⁰ then perhaps the beginning of a way forward is to resist any conception of the church's being, much less of the peace to which the church is called to witness, as simply "given"—as if simply waiting there to be narrated, enacted, or made. For it belongs to the event of God's apocalyptic, self-giving love that peace shall only be *received* in the power of the Spirit, as God sends us broken and bleeding into solidarity with those who "are not" and, ontologically speaking, will never truly "be."⁸¹

⁸⁰ Donald MacKinnon, "Kenosis and Establishment," in *The Stripping of the Altars* (Bungay, Suffolk: Fontana Library, 1969), 19.

⁸¹ For this way of putting the matter, I am indebted to Nate Kerr.

O Prince of peace,
from peace that is no peace,
from the grip of all that is evil,
from a violent righteousness . . .
deliver us.

From paralysis of will,
from lies and misnaming,
from terror of truth . . .
deliver us.

From hardness of heart,
from trading in slaughter,
from the worship of death . . .
deliver us.

By the folly of your gospel,
by your choosing our flesh,
by your nakedness and pain . . .
heal us.

By your weeping over the city,
by your refusal of the sword,
by your facing of horror . . .
heal us.

By your bursting from the tomb,
by your coming in judgment,
by your longing for peace . . .
heal us.

*Grant us peace. AMEN*⁸²

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⁸² Source unknown. Reprinted from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, © 1992 Brethren Press, Faith and Life Press, and Mennonite Publishing House, selection 697. Used by permission.

Tripp York and Chuck Seay. *Third Way Allegiance: Christian Witness in the Shadow of Religious Empire*. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2011.

Third Way Allegiance: Christian Witness in the Shadow of Religious Empire concisely engages the entangled commitments of many US Christians to the gospel of Christ and the ruling powers of the state. It invites readers to critically engage “life as a Christian under the post-Christian, yet exceptionally religious, empire that is the United States of America” (13) and not to assume a convergence of “Christian” and “American” values. The authors seek to foster discussion among believers who read the book together. Each of its three major parts contains six chapters, and nearly every chapter comprises a historical narrative introducing the topic and a critical appraisal of the actions recounted and their relevance for faith today. Each chapter includes questions to guide small groups in discussing the issues.

Part one, “Our People,” shares the witness of individuals whose lives “would be unintelligible if God does not exist” (17). It responds to influences of the New Atheists (e.g., Harris, Dawkins), who claim non-theistic rationalities are objective and incontrovertible. These frameworks, the authors suggest, have crept into the church and have led to a demise in Christian practice by creating people who believe in God but live as if God did not exist. The witness of those encountered in this section encourages believers to reject complacency in such arenas as environmental and animal ethics, poverty, racism, coercive violence, and the place of Christian rationality among rival conceptual frameworks.

Part two, “Our Politics,” argues that Christianity should not embrace the politics of surrounding cultures, acting in “complicity with the empire’s understanding of what it means to be political” (48), but rather witness to the politics of the gospel. The latter should guide Christians not only in criticizing American policy but in influencing and changing the state; evangelism is an implicit focus here. Chapters in this section introduce nonviolent political alternatives, calling into question US participation in capital punishment, terrorism, militarism, state idolatry, and the supposed egalitarianism of certain forms of democracy.

Part three, “Our Praise,” deals with Christian participation “in the state’s liturgy in hopes of showing the difference between what makes one a

Christian and what makes one, to speak crudely, an ‘American,’” and critiques several civic holidays used to make “us its disciples” (82). These liturgies impact all aspects of American life, including church life. The emphasis is primarily on the violence supported in American practices, economic abuse, and the covering up of genocidal militaristic policies.

Third Way Allegiance is an invaluable resource for rethinking church practices today, and many chapters apply to a wider North American context, engaging Canadian as well as American believers. The authors continually point to the implicit violence underlying much of the political power exercised in the US and its global allies that many Christians take to be compatible with the politics of the church, failing to recognize that the gospel witness advocates a nonviolent, anti-imperial approach to politics and social relationships. Especially helpful are the historical examples and gospel examples that suggest an alternate politics. The book’s format makes it ideal for small groups to navigate a renewed approach to Christian ethics, and the topics are highly relevant in a North American context, focusing on the horrors of military violence, economic disparity, racism, and the destruction of the other-than-human world.

For all its merits, *Third Way Allegiance* is weak in a few areas of theology, particularly in its exclusivist perspective that (unintentionally?) disparages those outside the church as simply in rebellion toward God and not offering anything politically or ethically viable. The strong emphasis on the church/world dichotomy paints the former as the sole bastion of light in a dark world and the latter as having nothing helpful to say. Such a position is theologically suspect and empirically dubious, given the overlap of Christian and non-Christian attitudes toward the nonviolent politics and ethics supported in this book.

Third Way Allegiance also leaves one feeling as though a person can be purely within one tradition without being influenced by others. Attempting to discern what is “gospel” and what is “outside culture” seems misguided, as the makeup of any tradition is wildly complex, arising out of a matrix of dialogical relationships. The authors could offer more grace to others and recognize the wisdom of different traditions, even aspects labeled “American.” One could agree with all the ethical and political positions adopted without polarizing the church and the world, instead accepting the

dynamic complexities and nuances of all traditions, some of which perhaps could even positively change the church.

All in all, this challenging book is a valuable contribution to North American church life. It is sure to spark powerful dialog, calling Christians to reject the violence seen all too often in the state in favor of the nonviolent politics at the heart of the gospel and Jesus' love for neighbor and enemy alike.

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Ronald J. Sider, ed. *The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion, and Capital Punishment*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012

For many years Ron Sider has written about Christian attitudes to life issues, and has advocated Christian nonviolence and a consistently pro-life approach to war, abortion, and capital punishment. In *The Early Church on Killing* he brings his historian's training to bear on the search for roots in the first three centuries of the church's history. He is aware that Christians today are often selectively pro-life; so he finds it illuminating to study abortion (which many oppose) together with war and capital punishment (which many favor).

His method in this book is to assemble all the relevant material in one place, punctuated by his own commentary, which draws upon the extensive scholarly writing on the subject. He is aware that he has theological convictions and he states his own Anabaptist perspective; but he is determined that as far as possible he will eliminate bias from his historical judgments, for he views it as "fundamentally immoral" (14) to slant texts to fit a pre-existing ideological position. Where there are texts that are ambiguous or (from his vantage point) problematic, he is determined to

look the difficulties in the face. In charitable but at times pointed asides he requires similar craft and transparency from other writers.

Four-fifths of *The Early Church and Killing* is a valuable collection of excerpts from Christian writings of the centuries prior to the emperor Constantine's accession in the early fourth century. Some of these sources are theological (Sider devotes twenty pages to Tertullian); others are church orders (such as the *Apostolic Tradition*); and some—such as the grave inscriptions for Christian legionaries—are archaeological. Sider knows that inadvertently his coverage of the sources will be incomplete, but his batting average is high; I know of only two pre-Constantinian sources that I wish he had included. His comments address scholarly differences, and he appears fair in his representation of the work of leading non-pacifist scholars John Helgeland and Louis Swift; only where a German scholar “reads his own assumptions into the text” does Sider bristle (152). I regret that the translations of the early Christian writings that Sider uses—slightly modernized—are those in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* that were published in Scotland over 140 years ago.

In a concluding “Afterword” Sider sifts and summarizes the materials that he has presented. About abortion and capital punishment he offers evidence that the sources unanimously reject these practices. But when he comes to killing, war, and military service, he recognizes that he has entered contested territory. He nevertheless confidently offers summaries under nine headings. In general I believe that he occupies the scholarly high ground. On the topic of the book—killing—Sider is hard to refute: “Nine different Christian writers in sixteen different treatises say that killing is wrong. No extant Christian writing before Constantine argues that there is any circumstance under which a Christian may kill” (168).

On two other points—the early Christians' immersion in the admonitions in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to love the enemy, as well as their recurrent references to the Isaiah/Micah “swords into ploughshares” passages—his evidence is equally strong. Under his fifth heading, reasons for rejecting Christian participation in the military, Sider notes—correctly, I believe—that the Christians, who were concerned to avoid idolatry, more often based their refusal upon their commitment not to kill.

Nevertheless, from the mid-3rd century onwards, an increasing

number of Christians were found in the legions. Under his final heading, Sider deals with these, acknowledging the messiness of the story (from the late 2nd-century *Thundering Legion* to soldier martyrs such as Julius the Veteran); he also recognizes ways that soldiers, after conversion, might be able to stay in the legions without violating the church's prohibition of killing.

At times I would like a different shading of the evidence. For example, I would have Sider take more seriously the primitive biblical theology of the North African soldiers whom Tertullian met ("Moses carried a rod . . . and Joshua the son of Nun leads a line of march, and the people warred" [*De Idololatria* 19]), not least because they were anticipating, from below, themes that in the early 5th century Augustine of Hippo would make central to respectable Christian theology (*Epistle 189, to Boniface*). But in general I find Sider to be an authoritative guide who has the gift of writing crisply and effectively, and I warmly welcome this book.

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Jared Burkholder and David C. Cramer, eds. *The Activist Impulse: Essays on the Intersection of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012.

What do you do if you are located in an evangelical tradition long removed from its Anabaptist heritage and you discover that heritage and find it attractive? If you are Jared Burkholder, a professor at Grace College, and David Cramer, a doctoral student at Baylor University and former instructor at Bethel College (Indiana), you tap other like-minded young scholars and sympathetic senior scholars and produce a lively, thought-provoking collection of essays contending that evangelicals would benefit greatly from more appropriation of Anabaptist emphases—and that Anabaptists should see their tradition as compatible with evangelicalism.

The book's first section, "Intersecting Stories: Historical Reflection on the Nexus of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism," draws on three senior scholars, including two Mennonites (Steve Nolt and John Roth), who warmly welcome the interest of evangelicals in Anabaptism and emphasize the compatibility between the two streams of Christianity. Roth, especially, seeks to counter the more hostile response to evangelicalism from Anabaptist scholars in an important earlier collection (Norman Kraus, ed., *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism* [1979]).

The discussion by Nolt and Roth points to a complicated issue lurking throughout this volume. What precisely do we mean by "evangelicalism"? The editors intentionally did not ask their writers to follow a given, stable definition but gave them the freedom to use the term as they saw fit. Nolt's definition is followed by most of the other authors: "Evangelicalism is a stream of Protestant Christianity marked by emphases on religious conversion, active and overt expression of faith, the authority of the Bible, and Christ's death on the cross" (13). This rather benign definition doesn't clarify why there would be any tension between "evangelicalism" and "Anabaptism." Writers in this book don't want to emphasize tensions; most advocate harmony between the two streams.

Nolt's definition puts 20th-century American evangelicalism in a direct trajectory with earlier Protestants. The definition followed by contributors to the Kraus volume would suggest more discontinuity between earlier Protestants and 20th-century American evangelicals that has to do with the emergence around 1900 of the fundamentalist movement. More recent evangelicalism, according to this alternative definition, cannot be understood apart from its identity as a kind of "post-fundamentalist" movement. As such, evangelicalism builds on fundamentalism and in some sense remains defined by its core elements. These elements are quite a bit more specific than Nolt's list. For example, it's not just "the authority of the Bible" but "verbal, plenary inspiration" and inerrancy. It's not just "Christ's death on the cross" but the substitutionary atonement. And, importantly, less than full adherence to these beliefs is considered heretical.

When we think of evangelicalism in terms of its modern fundamentalist roots, it is easier to grasp why some see stronger tensions between evangelicalism and Anabaptism than are expressed in *The Activist*

Impulse. However, since the book seeks to encourage evangelicals to be more open to Anabaptist influences, it makes sense that such tensions would not be front and center. Only if we approach this conversation from the other side—whether Anabaptists should be more open to evangelical influences—do the points of tension become more important.

Several essays sketch historical background for formerly Anabaptist evangelical groups such as the Missionary Church and Grace Brethren. Two others show how (admittedly a small minority of) evangelicals have been open to Anabaptist influences, especially from John Howard Yoder, in contrast to the view that evangelicalism should be understood *only* in terms of conservative politics.

The final section includes stimulating essays linking evangelical and Anabaptist theologies in order to enhance our peace witness. Kirk MacGregor argues persuasively for a nonviolent atonement theology more “orthodox” than Denny Weaver’s, and David Cramer draws heavily on Yoder to make a strong case for a biblically-based pacifism with the potential to draw Anabaptists and evangelicals closer together. Timothy Paul Erdel argues for Christian social faithfulness focusing on “making Christian disciples” (defined in terms of “biblical pacifism”) more than on secular politics. Erdel, like others in this collection, appears to believe that evangelicals who are pacifists in the Anabaptist sense have something more fundamentally in common with non-pacifist evangelicals than they do with non-Christian pacifists or, perhaps, even non-evangelical pacifist Christians. I wonder if evangelical pacifists take seriously enough the problem of evangelical Christianity tending to influence people to be more violent, not less.

This may be at least partly why earlier Mennonite writers were concerned about the influence of evangelicalism. My problem is not with the four points Nolt lists in defining evangelicalism, but with the impact of fundamentalism on those older evangelical beliefs during the 20th century, and the sense that this book’s writers don’t take seriously that impact’s problematic effect—perhaps paradigmatically expressed in typical evangelical hostility toward pacifism that makes me question how much common cause Anabaptists could have with non-pacifist evangelicals. The suspicion I, as an Anabaptist, have about rapprochement with evangelicals is largely due to their antipathy toward pacifism. My question to Cramer and

others is why, as pacifists, they want to remain identified with such an anti-pacifist stream of Christian faith.

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Peter J. Leithart. *Between Babel and Beast: America and Empires in Biblical Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.

The movement of empire studies over the past several decades has left hardly any discipline untouched, and theology is no exception. Publishers have produced books on Christianity's imperial history, Jesus and empire, Paul and empire, revelation and empire, the prophetic critiques of empire—the list is nearly exhaustive. So, what might Peter J. Leithart's book contribute to the conversation?

To begin, Leithart sees his volume as uniquely positioned in the debates of the left and right in American politics. He denounces the imperial form Christian politics has taken in America (i.e., nationalism), while simultaneously calling America to a truer Christian nationhood—what he calls “God's imperium.” That he can position himself both for and against the political right and left has the potential to move particular debates beyond the impasse of partisan politics. But his attempt to play ally and critic to both could also backfire. How his work will be received remains to be seen.

Leithart's project, though highly political, is also thoroughly theological. The author's analysis of American empire is foregrounded by his biblical exposition of the Israelites' deuteronomistic history, especially Genesis. Since Cain, political orders have been built on the sacrifice of others. In Leithart's reading, the tower at Babel is the culmination of a sacrificial, dominant, imperial order, in which a nation attempts to make a single, unified, universal Name and power for itself. Yahweh intervenes, confusing its language and scattering it, effectively dissolving the imperial project. This does not, however, signal that all empires are bad. Such a suggestion, made

by some scholars, is only possible under the assumption that all empires are the same. This is not the case today, nor was it in the Ancient Near East.

Leithart argues that imperial orders are inevitable forms of political organization and are not all “babelic.” In contrast to Babel, he shows how God’s imperium is found in God’s covenant with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant, the origins of the Israelite people, promises land and seed, the two elements required for the formation of a nation. But God intervenes in Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, founding an imperium not on sacrifice (as Cain did) but on faith and covenant relationship. This is extended into the New Testament and fulfilled in Christ’s sacrifice for all. Leithart makes the case that while babelic empires are idolatrous, imperial order in and of itself is part of God’s working in the world. This analysis is probably his strongest contribution to biblical scholarship.

The author uses this nuanced understanding of imperial orders to criticize contemporary American culture and politics as replicating babelic empire, and to call America back to its proper godly imperium as a Christian nation. Besides his thorough work on the Old Testament, he also suggests that since Jesus’ teachings employ explicitly imperial language, it is appropriate to maintain this, while recognizing the drastic differences between babelic empires and God’s imperium. Leithart’s argument seems sound, but there is a surreptitious lacuna in his contention for America’s existence as a legitimate (read: ordained) Christian empire, concerning the nation’s historical origins.

While Leithart acknowledges the mistreatment of Native Americans and the savior complex that fueled it, he minimizes the situation in his conclusion that “[o]ur treatment of American Indians remains a dark blot on our history” (109). He seems to think that the error of America lies not in the fact that its very existence is founded on the violent colonization of the land but in some mishaps along the way. Perhaps that accounts for his failure to adequately address the colonial, babelic Christian origins of the American nation. Besides a few pages on the Trail of Tears, the author fails to mention Columbus and the Christian doctrine of discovery supporting conquest of the land, or the massacres of Native peoples led by Chivington and Custer. He may be right that the Abrahamic covenant and Christ marks an end and victory over sacrificial imperial orders and begins God’s imperium, but

America is not it. Contrary to popular belief, America was not founded on God's covenant with European settlers (replicating Abraham) but on the sacrificial slaughter of Native peoples (akin to Cain).

If America is a babelic empire, then it must not simply reorganize into God's imperium. Rather, following the deuteronomistic history, the way out of babelic existence is to be scattered by Yahweh—not so much God's imperium as God's decolonization.

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Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds. *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

“Prophetic evangelicals are called to lead the church as the *ekklesia* of *shalom*—the discipleship community of equals who bear witness to Christ's just and peaceable kingdom in and for the whole world” (48). The editors of this book use the adjective *prophetic* to describe an emerging identity of Christians who at some point in time self-identified as evangelicals but, given current American political and social contexts, are uneasy with that qualifier alone. “Prophetic” seems to offer a qualifier of evangelical faith that allows people a way of maintaining evangelical identity while also working for issues of peace and justice. The editors have set out to engage conversation, mostly with American academics from a variety backgrounds who have struggled with, or are struggling with, the essence of evangelical identity and their place within such an identity in a polarized context that puts Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis in tension with each other.

The fundamental question that this book explores is how sound Christian belief informs and shapes sound Christian practice in the context within which a community engages life. As the above quotation states it, prophetic evangelicals are those who define and critique their living in light

of Jesus' kingdom teachings on justice and peace for the well-being of the world. This, they argue, contrasts with mainstream American evangelicalism, which has allowed itself to be too closely identified and shaped by partisan, particularly Republican, political agendas.

The core of the volume is composed of twelve chapters by contributing authors who tell a little of their journey in faith and life, and then delve into a particular faith focus that can shape how to live in the world, such as creation, shalom, justice, resurrection, reconciliation, and the cross, to name just a few. Each looks at how life can be shaped through these particular lenses of doctrine that engage with real life pain, struggles, and joys, particularly of marginalized communities. The good news in each case is that deep suffering can be named, and that the hope of Jesus Christ is that healing, restoration, reconciliation, and peace can be experienced even in the midst of that suffering.

Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom could be a helpful resource for those who are wrestling with their identity as evangelical Christians. As well, it could offer them conversation partners from across the evangelical continuum who have also wrestled with, and found ways to hold/reclaim/re-engage, their spiritual heritage. This book could also be valuable for those whose spiritual identity is other than evangelical but would find in these writings conversation partners whom they may not have thought even existed, along with common ground upon which to build dialog and action for the common good.

Although the editors worked hard to be inclusive in gathering the essays presented in this volume, the overwhelming majority of the pieces reflects a fairly America-centric view. What would strengthen their global vision, as they stated it in the quotation cited above, is to include essays from self-identified evangelicals from various parts of the world. For example, both faculty and students at Bethlehem Bible College, an evangelical institution situated in Jesus' birthplace in Palestine, wrestle with how to incarnate Jesus' vision of peace, justice, and love of enemy under Israeli occupation and control of West Bank lands. Another example is that of some Philippine evangelical Christians, a minority sub-group within the Roman Catholic majority population, who are working at dialogue for peace with another minority group who have been in conflict with the Christian majority,

namely Muslims on the island of Mindanao. The inclusion of such voices would have enhanced the editors' aim of cultivating conversations of faith for a truly global vision of how communities of Jesus' followers are engaging God's shalom of reconciliation and transformation for the common good. Let the conversation broaden and grow.

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Christian Smith. *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012.

Evangelical sociologist Christian Smith is committed to the Bible as authoritative and divinely inspired, but argues that the biblicism of contemporary evangelicalism is untenable and should be replaced by a more faithful and life-giving way of reading scripture. Smith defines biblicism as a constellation of ten convictions: the Bible contains God's inerrant words; represents the totality of God's communication to humanity; covers all issues relevant to Christian life; is easily understood; is best read literally; can be understood without reference to church creeds, traditions, or hermeneutical frameworks; exhibits internal harmony; is universally applicable over time; covers all matters of Christian belief and practice; constitutes a handbook of inerrant teaching on matters of science, economics, health, politics, and even romance (4-5).

By marshaling evidence from books and statements of faith from websites of Christian organizations and seminaries, Smith seeks to demonstrate the pervasiveness of biblicism within evangelicalism. Like other reviewers, I wonder about Smith's definition. Certainly some evangelicals display the simplistic biblicism that he outlines, but others interpret the Bible in much more thoughtful and nuanced ways than those reflected by his definition.

The author argues that biblicism is untenable and inconsistent because

it cannot deliver on its promises. If the Bible is inerrant, harmonious, easily understandable, and universally applicable, then evangelicals should agree on matters of faith and doctrine. In reality, evangelicalism displays “pervasive interpretive pluralism,” with biblicists disagreeing on almost every matter of doctrine and practice. According to Smith, this pluralism is rooted in the diversity that characterizes the Bible itself. Biblicism is intellectually dishonest because it denies this pluralism and operates differently in practice than in theory. While claiming to base interpretations on the entire witness of the Bible, biblicists actually encounter a plethora of materials that cannot be configured into a totally coherent system of doctrine, and so they develop interpretive paradigms of what the Bible says. Materials that don’t fit are routinely ignored or artificially forced into the paradigm. Texts left over from one paradigm may become central to another. Hence, some biblicists are pacifists, others just-war advocates.

Part one of the book, “The Impossibility of Biblicism,” concludes by identifying other weaknesses such as ignoring biblical teachings and texts without explanation, arbitrarily determining that some biblical practices are culturally relative and no longer binding, an inability to handle racist and other difficult passages, and arbitrarily marshaling biblical texts to justify pre-existing practices and beliefs.

Part two, “Toward a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture,” opens with the book’s most helpful chapter. Smith advocates a Christocentric hermeneutic that will feel familiar to readers from the Anabaptist tradition. Because Jesus Christ is both the center and goal of scripture, we must read every part in light of the good news of how God is redeeming the world through Christ. We should interpret every text and consider every topic, biblical and contemporary, through the logic of the gospel. What makes scripture authoritative is not inerrant propositions but its testimony to God’s saving work through Christ. My appreciative quibble is that the author’s description of the Bible sidelines the Old Testament somewhat, and does not quite capture how the New Testament consistently links Jesus to God’s prior saving activity on Israel’s behalf. Perhaps the Bible’s center is God’s redeeming work in the story of Israel and the world that reaches a highpoint and fulfillment in Christ, a description that encourages Christians to embrace more fully God’s saving activity in the Old Testament.

Smith's Christocentric hermeneutic allows Christians to acknowledge and deal with the Bible's plurality, incompleteness, and problematic texts. We can abandon biblical practices not consistent with the logic of the gospel. We can develop a biblical affirmation such as our oneness in Christ into a full-blown anti-slavery stance that New Testament writers did not yet understand as the logic of the gospel.

I applaud Smith's suggestions for how to read the Bible as good news. However, the interpretive pluralism which he sees as discrediting biblicism also afflicts Christocentric hermeneutics, which is no more likely than biblicism to find agreement on infant versus believer's baptism, atonement theories, church structure, worship, or pacifism versus just war.

The Bible Made Impossible will be most appealing to readers recovering from a biblicist (as defined by Smith) way of interpreting scripture. Such readers will have their misgivings about biblicism validated and will be guided towards a more life-giving, intellectually honest, and truly evangelical way of reading the Bible.

Dan Epp-Tiessen, Associate Professor of Bible, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Jens Zimmerman. *Incarnational Humanism: A Philosophy of Culture for the Church in the World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.

Incarnational Humanism is a spirited defense of classical Christian theology as the best ground for a humanist philosophy of culture by Jens Zimmerman, Canada Research Chair of Interpretation, Religion, and Culture at Trinity Western University. Zimmerman sees the doctrine of the incarnation as the key to elevating the status of humanity in the ancient world and anchoring human dignity, solidarity, and social responsibility today.

In the first half of the book, the author acknowledges that early Christian thinkers were influenced by Platonic philosophy but argues

they departed from its contempt for the body and the material world. For examples, he highlights how Athanasius celebrated God's sanctifying the human body in the incarnation (61) and how Irenaeus was willing to include the human body as part of the image of God (76). Furthermore, Zimmerman contends the heart of classical Christian humanism is the idea of *deification*, of becoming like God. For both Eastern and Western theologians, deification was rooted in the incarnation: "God's descent into human nature allows the human ascent to the divine" (85). This does not mean the abandonment of the body to become a pure spirit equal to God but rather the restoration of humanity to its full potential as revealed in Christ. This elevation of humanity also has social implications, binding Christians together in communion and calling them to care for the image of Christ present in all human beings.

In the second half, Zimmerman traces the gradual separation of humanism from its Christian roots through the medieval, Renaissance, and modern periods. He connects the "anti-humanism" of postmodern philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault to their dismissal of Christianity as Platonism, and challenges them with Gregory of Nyssa's emphasis on the divine elevation of human nature through the bodily resurrection (184). He then contrasts Nietzsche and Foucault's disavowal of ethics to the explicitly ethical impulses of later philosophers Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, whom he classifies as humanists (222). Still, Zimmerman is concerned that Derrida's resistance to definition encourages his theological disciples like John Caputo to fall into a kind of irrational fideism, advocating anarchist action in the name of an unknown God (243). The author concludes with a brief outline of the attitude towards culture entailed by incarnational humanism.

Incarnational Humanism is largely free of over-generalizations and polemics. As befits a professor of English, Zimmerman relies on close readings of texts to advance his argument and overturn the stereotype—recently revived by popular Christian author Brian McLaren—that Greek philosophy corrupted the early Christians, who in turn corrupted the message of Jesus. Mennonites and Anabaptists in particular will find some of their impressions of classical and medieval theology challenged.

At the same time, Mennonites may ask why, if the incarnation is so central to Christian humanism, no details of Jesus' life appear in the

discussion. Of the four gospels, only the gospel of John is referenced, primarily to emphasize the divinity of Jesus and the importance of the incarnation. I most noticed this lack of attention in the final chapter, where the author draws on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* to promote a posture of "realistic responsibility" that navigates between the radical's naïve question of "what would Jesus do?" and the compromiser's tendency to "collapse the distinctions between Christ and the world" (272). However, while in his *Ethics* Bonhoeffer himself ranges freely across the gospels and insists there that "it is quite wrong to establish a separate theology of the incarnation," Zimmerman's own presentation appears to lack any interest in what Jesus *did*, confirming the suspicion that classical theology tends to abstract Jesus from his life and message.

Still, these concerns should not overshadow Zimmerman's achievement in painting a sympathetic portrait of early Christian theologians like Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Gregory of Nyssa, and in carefully arguing that retrieving classical theology can help us recover a coherent Christian humanism. Despite wading through deep waters of theology and philosophy, the author's nimble prose makes this book readable and suitable for both advanced undergraduates and graduate students in theology. I would suggest it for inclusion in an introductory course on historical theology, and classes on Christianity and culture or philosophy and theology.

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David J. Neville. *A Peaceable Hope: Contesting Violent Eschatology in New Testament Narratives*. Studies in Peace and Scripture Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013.

David J. Neville is associate professor of theology and lecturer in New Testament studies at Charles Sturt University in Canberra, Australia. He is known for his writings on the Synoptic Problem, and on the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the NT. What do the NT eschatological visions reveal about the character of God and the ethics that cohere with that

theology? Are eschatological visions of retributive violence consistent with the teachings of Jesus on the one hand and with a theology of peace on the other? *A Peaceable Hope* is Neville's most substantial contribution so far to these questions.

Is God violent, and if so, is this problematic for conceptions of nonviolent human ethics? The traditional view is that the eschatological violence of God in judgment is theologically and ethically independent from Christian moral teaching for humans. Neville questions that. The present volume investigates the NT narratives (i.e., the four Gospels, Acts, and Revelation) for their individual understandings of the *eschaton* with regard to violence and nonviolence, whether divine or human.

The book proceeds in a roughly canonical fashion, beginning with Matthew and ending with Revelation. The chapters on Matthew, Mark, and Revelation are revisions of previously published essays, while those on Luke, Acts, and John are new. The book's thesis is that "while the standard apocalyptic scenario [including a vengeful and violent eschaton] is undoubtedly represented" in the NT, particularly in Matthew and Revelation, "deviations from this standard scenario" appear "most notably in Mark, the Fourth Gospel, and Acts" (6). More specifically, although "the notion of a 'single plot' in Scripture is unsustainable, . . . the trajectory staked out by the creation story, . . . the Jesus story, . . . and the vision of the new Jerusalem in Revelation 20-21 . . . [suggests that] intimations of eschatological vengeance in Revelation (and elsewhere) should be read in accordance with a hermeneutic of *shalom*" (244; *emphases original*).

The primary problems for a NT theology of peace are Matthew and Revelation. Although Matthew clearly portrays Jesus as teaching an ethic of love and nonviolence, he also portrays the judgment of God as both violent and vengeful. The tension is "deep-seated" (38). Matthew delights in eschatological visions of hell where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; cf. Luke 13:28, the only other NT text where this phrase occurs). How can a Christian ethic of love and nonviolence be accompanied with visions of divinely authorized sanctions that are retributive and violent? Neville is not the first to notice this problem in Matthew. He considers various attempts to address it, ultimately concluding that in Matthew "the *story of Jesus* itself" ultimately "undoes the logic of

eschatological violence” (31), whether or not Matthew himself recognizes this.

It turns out that Revelation is not really a problem. Disagreeing with such interpreters as Greg Carey, Adela Yarbro Collins, John J. Collins, John Dominic Crossan, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Miroslav Volf, Neville instead builds on the work of Richard Bauckham, M. Eugene Boring, G.B. Caird, Wilfrid Harrington, Richard Hays, William Klassen, Willard Swartley, John Sweet, and the present reviewer to argue that although John retains and adopts traditional apocalyptic motifs (including scenes of violent eschatological vengeance), he adapts and reworks them in keeping with his nonviolent Lamb Christology.

Neville has no qualms with divine judgment as such in the *eschaton*, calling it “biblically and theologically meaningful” (9), but in the end “divine judgment is more likely to be restorative than strictly retributive” (240). “Despite John’s use of violent imagery,” the Lamb Christology of Revelation is fully in step with the peaceable mission of Jesus and “the means by which the crucified Jesus ‘conquered’ are the means by which God ‘conquers,’ *without remainder*” (241, emphasis original).

This is a delightful, intriguing, and well-argued book. Its greatest weakness is perhaps in the construction of a canonical “trajectory” that qualifies, negates, or trumps competing perspectives within the canon. This volume is a fine contribution to the Studies in Peace and Scripture Series, and needs to be taken seriously in any investigation of NT eschatology with regard to peace, nonviolence, and the character of God.

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Lloyd Pietersen. *Reading the Bible after Christendom*. Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2012.

The premise of this book is that the rise of Christendom in the 4th century radically changed the way that Christians read Scripture. Given the demise of Christendom, Lloyd Pietersen aims, with a little help from 16th-century Anabaptists, to help the church of today once again read Scripture the way the early church did.

Pieterse begins with historical background, describing how the Bible was read by the earliest Christians, outlining how the church's alliance with wealth and power in the 4th century affected the interpretation of Scripture, and indicating how the 16th-century Anabaptists may provide resources for reading the Bible after Christendom. While parting company with them on some issues, he describes his hermeneutic as "true to the spirit and direction" of the Anabaptists, being "Jesus-centered, rooted in community reading, open to the Spirit and oriented to obedient response" (82-83).

In part two Pietersen fleshes out two aspects of his Post-Christendom hermeneutic: it is "Jesus-centered" in taking Jesus as Prophet, Pastor, and Poet to suggest that Scripture be read through prophetic, pastoral, and poetic lenses; and it rejects any reading of the Bible that marginalizes the complexities and competing voices of the Old Testament. The rest of part two consists of a summary of the whole Bible, including chapters on the Pentateuch, Joshua to Esther, Wisdom literature, the Prophets, the Gospels and Acts, the Letters and Revelation. Pietersen's summaries comprise brief discussions of the genre and content of the books with a focus on historical issues and key literary features. Some chapters also discuss contemporary scholarly issues, such as political and apocalyptic readings of Paul's letters.

In part three Pietersen describes what reading the Bible after Christendom might look like in practical terms, focusing on spirituality and mission. Setting aside an overly individualized and internalized understanding of spirituality, he suggests that small groups read scripture together carefully, facing head-on the questions and challenges it raises, and expecting to have their individual and corporate life transformed by their encounter with the text and each other. A discussion of the spirituality of Jesus and of the early Anabaptists further reinforces his understanding of

spirituality as transformation of individual and corporate life. For Pietersen, there is nothing “merely ethical” about this transformation; this is God’s work of transforming believers into the image of God, into a union with God that can be described in terms of divinization. With respect to mission, Pietersen draws on the work of Alan and Eleanor Kreider, Walter Brueggemann, and Sylvia Keesmaat and Bryan Walsh to suggest that reading the Bible for mission involves Christian communities being transformed by imaginative immersion in the biblical text so that they “not only expose the idols of our time but also visibly demonstrate to the surrounding communities that there is an attractive, alternative way to live” (226).

Pietersen’s exhortation that congregations engage with the text and each other is one of the book’s strengths. To this end, the author offers both a general account of what is in the Bible to orient readers and interpretive tools that might foster such reading. His discussion of Anabaptism, for which he depends heavily on Stuart Murray, will be interesting to some, though it would have benefitted from editing to make it read more smoothly.

The central section, an 86-page overview of the Bible, suffers from its brevity. At various points Pietersen’s lack of comment on his observations left me wondering why certain aspects of the text were mentioned, and his radical but undeveloped suggestions often left me unconvinced. I suspect this book will be frustrating for an academic reader, but perhaps the questions thus raised will bear fruit if it is used by groups reading Scripture together, as the author intends.

My biggest reservation about *Reading the Bible after Christendom* is the tendency to dismiss the creedal and exegetical tradition of the church as “inextricably bound up with issues of coercion, power politics, and violence” (57). While the rise of Christendom surely had a significant impact on the church’s exegesis, the social and political context in which we live has no less impact on how we read. In view of this, perhaps we would do better to approach the church’s tradition with the “hermeneutical openness and ... willingness to listen closely to, and engage with, those with whom we disagree” (58) that Pietersen advocates for interacting with our contemporaries.

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