



The Conrad Grebel Review

Volume 32, Number 3, Fall 2014

Contents

FALL 2013 BENJAMIN EBY LECTURE

Speaking Truth to Power:
Profiles of Rhetorical Courage for Church and Society
Susan Schultz Huxman

* * * * *

From “Creation Care” to “Watershed Discipleship”:
Re-Placing Ecological Theology and Practice
Ched Myers

* * * * *

O Sweet Exchange:
The Cross of Christ in the Drama of Reconciliation
Darrin Snyder Belousek

... and Book Reviews



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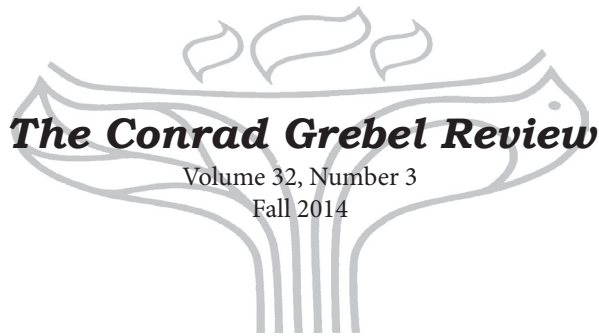
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Foreword 221

FALL 2013 BENJAMIN EBY LECTURE

Speaking Truth to Power: 222
Profiles of Rhetorical Courage for Church and Society
Susan Schultz Huxman

* * * * *

From “Creation Care” to “Watershed Discipleship”: 250
Re-Placing Ecological Theology and Practice
Ched Myers

O Sweet Exchange: 276
The Cross of Christ in the Drama of Reconciliation
Darrin Snyder Belousek

Book Reviews

Scott Thomas Prather. *Christ, Power and Mammon: Karl Barth* 295
and John Howard Yoder in Dialogue. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark,
2013. Jamie Pitts. *Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder’s*
Sociological Theology. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013.
Reviewed by David C. Cramer

Peggy Faw Gish. <i>Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation</i> . Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. Reviewed by Annette Mosher	298
J. Kevin Livingston. <i>A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism</i> . Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013. Reviewed by Mark D. Baker	300
Oliver O'Donovan. <i>Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology 1</i> . Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Reviewed by Paul Doerksen	302
J. Denny Weaver. <i>The Nonviolent God</i> . Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Reviewed by Fulco van Hulst	304
Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast, eds. <i>Mothering Mennonite</i> . Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013. Reviewed by Gayle Gerber Koontz	306
Robert Zacharias. <i>Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites and Migration in Canadian Literature</i> . Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2013. Reviewed by Susanne Guenther Loewen	308
Alain Epp Weaver. <i>Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future</i> . Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014. Reviewed by George D. Muedeking	310
Reta Halteman Finger and George D. McClain. <i>Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation</i> . Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2013. Reviewed by Virginia Wiles	313
Willard M. Swartley. <i>John</i> . The Believers Church Bible Commentary. Harrisonburg, VA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2013. Reviewed by Gary Yamasaki	315
Valerie Weaver-Zercher. <i>Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels</i> . Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 2013. Reviewed by Robert Zacharias	317

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Foreword

The lead-off article in this issue is the Fall 2013 Benjamin Eby Lecture given at Conrad Grebel University College by College President Susan Schultz Huxman. Publication of the Eby Lectures is a time-honored tradition of this journal, and the President's address is the latest in a series stretching over three decades. One of the two articles that follow her lecture calls for "replacing" ecological theory and practice, while the other focuses on Christ's cross in the drama of reconciliation. Book reviews and a call for papers round out the issue.

Jeremy M. Bergen, Editor

Stephen A. Jones, Managing Editor

THE BENJAMIN EBY LECTURESHIP

Established at Conrad Grebel University College in the 1980s, the Benjamin Eby Lectureship offers faculty members an opportunity to share research and reflections with the broader College and University community. Benjamin Eby (1785-1853) was a leading shaper of Mennonite culture in Upper Canada from the 1830s on. He and his wife Mary arrived from Pennsylvania in 1807. By 1812 he was an ordained bishop, and by 1813 the first Mennonite meetinghouse in the Waterloo area had been erected. About 1815 Eby saw to the building of the first schoolhouse. He continued his outstanding leadership in the church and in education throughout his life, all while supporting himself as a farmer. A lover of books, Eby wrote two primers for public school children, compiled the *Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung*, a new hymnal for Mennonites in Ontario, and edited a volume of articles by Anabaptist and early Mennonite authors. The latter is noteworthy especially because it preserves in a ministers' manual the traditional worship practices of the (Old) Mennonite Church. The Lectureship honors Eby's belief that the motivation to learn is a response to the Christian gospel.

FALL 2013 BENJAMIN EBY LECTURE

Speaking Truth to Power: Profiles of Rhetorical Courage for Church and Society

Susan Schultz Huxman

Tonight is the 26th occasion of the Benjamin Eby Lecture Series, first inaugurated under President Ralph Lebold's tenure in 1981. According to the program for that event, the series was designed to be "a fertile seedbed of scholarship and stimulating thought" and to "deal with academic issues within an explicitly Christian framework." The first speaker was Grebel's first Chaplain and Professor of Religious Studies, Walter Klaassen, from Saskatchewan, an Oxford PhD who had come from Kansas after serving four years at Bethel College. In the introduction of his talk entitled "The University: The Temple of Intellect Past and Present," Walter said the event was challenging for two reasons: he was giving the initial lecture, and he couldn't do justice to his topic in the short time frame allotted. "Reflecting on the university, its place and function is," he said, "a bit like trying to dip water with a sieve."¹

An added challenge tonight is that this event is not only offered as an academic lecture but also branded as one of our inspirational "50 events to celebrate 50 years" of the College. I think it fitting for me, a scholar who likes to study rhetorical hybrids—the blending of occasions, speech forms, and audience expectations—that this is one of those bifurcated symbolic events. It is part academic lecture and part motivational community building. I used to tell my students to think of me as a platypus. I like to study rhetorical forms that are not predictable or easy to categorize; speech artifacts that are unstable, unusual, even peculiar, like that strange aquatic creature the platypus.

And further, I think it fitting that as one who studies "rhetorical

¹ Walter Klaassen, "The Temple of Intellect Past and Present," first Benjamin Eby Lecture, Conrad Grebel College (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Grebel College, 1981), 1.

underdogs”—individuals who despite long odds manage to survive and thrive and win the argument—that this lecture series is named for Benjamin Eby. Eby was a real mover and shaker in Waterloo County in the early 1800s, so much so they called the place Ebytown, at least for a while before non-Mennonite Germans immigrated here and renamed it Berlin. Now, you may say, Eby doesn't sound much like an underdog. But he really defied expectations. At five-foot-five and around 140 pounds, he was a very slight man. “You'll never make it as a farmer! You're simply not strong or large enough,” said his family and friends. Well, not only did Eby make it as a farmer, he was a hugely successful one. He also made it as a businessman, a Mennonite bishop, a teacher, an author, a city leader, a musician, a community builder, and perhaps he also served as dog catcher! He truly “punched above his weight.” In many ways, Eby was a “Profile in Rhetorical Courage for Church and Society.”²

Lest you get the wrong idea, my lecture does not profile Benjamin Eby. But it does profile some other notable figures who directly or indirectly speak to the kind of institution of higher learning Conrad Grebel University College has aspired to be for the past 50 years.

I want to begin by telling a story—a shortened version of Robert Munsch's “The Paper Bag Princess.” Elizabeth was a beautiful princess. She lived in a castle and had expensive princess clothes. She was going to marry a prince named Ronald. Unfortunately, a dragon smashed her castle, burned all her clothes with his fiery breath, and carried off Prince Ronald. Elizabeth decided to chase the dragon and get Ronald back. She looked everywhere for something to wear, but the only thing she could find that was not burnt was a paper bag. So she put on the paper bag and followed the dragon. Elizabeth was able to outsmart the dragon by having him show her all his amazing skills. Finally the dragon was so tired he didn't even move. Elizabeth walked right over the dragon and opened the door to the cave. There was Prince Ronald. He looked at her and said, “Elizabeth, you are a mess! You smell like ashes, your hair is all tangled and you are wearing a dirty old paper bag. Come back when you are dressed like a real princess.” “Ronald,” said

² “Benjamin Eby,” Global Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO). See also Lorraine Roth, “The Years of Benjamin Eby, Pioneer Mennonite Leader in Ontario, Canada,” *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 9 (April 1986): 18-41.

Elizabeth, “Your clothes are really pretty and your hair is very neat. You look like a real prince, but you . . . you are a bum!” They didn’t get married after all.³

So, why did I tell that story? Is it because Munsch is a Canadian author? The story is entertaining? The story’s archetypal theme speaks to the human condition? It’s a wicked example of parody? Feminists identify with it? The story subverts the normal order of things? The answer is, all of the above.

This Cinderella version obviously reverses gender roles—the female becomes the rescuer. But in this clever retelling of the tale, it becomes clear that while the details change considerably, the message or core truth remains. It is an ageless tale with a feminist twist. In the original version, the prince rescues Cinderella, but the real message is that he must love her in her menial role, in her rags, in her paper bag dress, if her real nature is to be made evident.

I use this story often in a rhetoric course to elicit discussion on the power of utilizing a recognizable form (fairytale) with an ageless message (do not be deceived by appearances) to teach a radical and subversive message (women can be heroes, rescuers, and successful on their own). Predictably, women in the course love this story, finding it edgy, liberating, and heroic. Some men are almost always uncomfortable with it, and object to the casting of Ronald. The tensions in interpretation make for engaging discussion.

This contemporary children’s story illustrates three principles that have guided my scholarship for the past 25 years: 1) the power of stories to persuade; 2) the invitational quality of rhetoric and the role of “identification,” and 3) the brazenness of subversive discourse and the study of rhetorical underdogs. I have provided a “rhetoric legend” in the program that outlines key concepts in my research activity.⁴ Tonight, I want to explore these three principles, which emanate from rich and complex rhetorical acts—speeches that far exceed the challenges of “The Paper Bag Princess” even as they trade on its techniques.

³ Robert Munsch, *The Paper Bag Princess* (Toronto, ON: Annick Press, 1980). Since its original publication, this book has been reprinted 52 times, has sold more than 3 million copies, and has been translated into dozens of languages.

⁴ See Appendix.

The Power of Stories

“Let me tell you a story.” That simple line triggers rapt attention from young and old alike. Storytelling is the principal means by which humans have entertained one another, taught one another, and influenced one another from the beginning of time. We are indeed creatures of story. All varieties of creatures inhabit the planet, but we alone are story creatures. Rhetorical theorist Walter Fisher calls us “homo narrans,” the storytelling animal.⁵ This goes well beyond Aristotle’s view that we are “the animal that lives in a polis” or “a featherless biped” or “the rational animal.”⁶ Isak Dinesen, the great Danish storyteller, said: “To be a person is to have a story to tell.”⁷ The great spiritual leaders of the world, Jesus included, taught in stories (parables), not bulleted points or pie charts. Stories transcend culture, time, and circumstances. Story is the universal language.

So, we like stories, but what can they do for us? First, stories empower, sustain, and connect us to one another; they’re like piecing and stitching a quilt. Stories secure a bond from one generation to the next. Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher, called stories our “societal glue.”⁸ There is an ancient African proverb: “If you inherit land, you have to farm it. If you inherit a story, you have to tell it.” It’s a great saying because it reminds us that the storyteller has an obligation to pass on culture, character, and identity. It’s a high calling. When you tell a story, you gain great authenticity as a source.

Second, stories are enormously comforting. They follow a pattern we all know. Stories begin with a reassuring invitation: “Once upon a time,” “A long, long time ago,” “In the beginning,” “And it came to pass.” The scene is set, characters are introduced, conflict and suspense develop, rising action and denouement (resolution) follow. Children as young as two recognize

⁵ Walter Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action* (Columbia, SC: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1987); and “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument,” *Communication Monographs* 51, no. 1 (1984): 1-22.

⁶ Aristotle, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, trans. Lane Cooper (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1932); Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T. A. Sinclair (New York: Penguin Books, 1962).

⁷ Isak Dinesen (aka Karen Blixen), *Out of Africa* (New York: Random House, 1937); see also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), where Dinesen is quoted as saying “All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story....”

⁸ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1944).

this form. “If a picture is worth a thousand words,” says Dinesen, “then a story is worth a thousand assurances.”

Third, in terms of organizational communication, storytelling is the most powerful way you can pass on institutional memory. Annette Simmons, author of *The Story Factor*, identifies six foundational stories that people tell: 1) who am I stories; 2) why this place stories; 3) vision stories; 4) teachable moment stories; 5) values in action stories; and 6) I know what you’re thinking stories.⁹ She argues that many methods of persuasion are “push” strategies—manipulative, sometimes deceptive, claims and appeals often based in fear. Story, by contrast, is a “pull” strategy—an invitation to engage an audience on its own terms. At Grebel, we engage in all manner of gentle pull strategies in storytelling to build community and affirm our identity. The Grebel vision story, of which there are many versions, is especially inspirational.

Both the story of Conrad Grebel University College and Harvey Taves, one of its co-founders, are critical “vision stories”—versions of which are told in the Grebel anniversary book: *Bridging Mind & Spirit: Conrad Grebel University College, 1963-2013*. The Grebel story was told in the first Eby lecture. “Conrad Grebel College is named after a young humanist scholar who as a student wasted his time, money and health and finally became a drop-out,” Walter Klaassen explained. “He did, however, get an education. And he knew how to think. Although he wrote poetry in Greek, he was not especially brilliant. And he would long have been forgotten were it not for the fact that he and his friends proposed a radical new model for the relationship of church and state and then acted upon it.”¹⁰

In tonight’s lecture I would add this to the Grebel story: Through lively debates and provocative letters and speeches, Conrad Grebel (ca. 1498–1526) first articulated the need for the Reformation to go a step further—to embrace a new church that favored a voluntary Christian fellowship, a gathered free church of believers, based on the New Testament. He refused to baptize his daughter Isabella, and performed the first adult baptism in Zürich in January 1525. For these “treasonous” acts he was arrested, imprisoned, and

⁹ Annette Simmons, *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion through the Art of Storytelling* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 1-26.

¹⁰ Klassen, “Eby Lecture,” 3.

died before he reached his 30th birthday. His entire Christian ministry was compressed into the last four years of his life, and his powerful witness as an Anabaptist did not emerge until the last 18 months of it. What an amazing, history-altering 18 months! Our students in residence, many of whom are not Mennonite, are attracted and empowered by his story.

Fast-forward four centuries later. The Grebel story takes root in the form of a new college along Westmount Road in Waterloo, Ontario. Several courageous and visionary founders, including Norman High, Harvey Taves, and Milton Good, devised an audacious plan that no doubt sent many Mennonites reeling. As Grebel history professor Marlene Epp writes: “[They] conceived of the radical idea to plant Mennonite young people on a secular university campus. . . . While so many Mennonite schools had chosen to separate themselves from the world, Grebel deliberately sought to participate in the world.”¹¹ This was not only a new venture for the Ontario Mennonites, but for all Mennonites in North America.

Last year at a leadership team retreat for Grebel students, we told the story of Harvey Taves, one of the founders of the College. Here was a man who before his untimely death at age 39 worked tirelessly and patiently for six years in the late 1950s to get Mennonites in Ontario to embrace the idea of starting a Mennonite college on a secular university campus. Detractors on the right dismissed the idea of such a college as “too worldly” or too expensive. Detractors on the left, many with ties to Goshen College in Indiana, dismissed the idea because a Waterloo campus would compete with Goshen for students and donors. To summarize the sentiments of a leading US Mennonite theologian of the day: There would be too few qualified academics in Canada to do the job right.¹²

Taves was not to be outdone. He was a master of diplomacy. (Unlike Benjamin Eby, he was a towering man, which may have been an advantage in navigating between church factions.) Without being dismissive or discouraged with either of these formidable blocs of naysayers, Taves quietly worked behind the scenes to line up support. Shortly before the college’s

¹¹ Marlene Epp, *Bridging Mind & Spirit: Conrad Grebel University College, 1963-2013* (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Grebel University College, 2013), 17.

¹² Harvey Taves correspondence. Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Milton Good Library, Conrad Grebel University College, Box 59-60.

charter was finally granted in 1961, he wrote:

One thing seems absolutely certain to me, and that is that the young person who maintains his faith in the face of opposition is in a much better position to represent that faith once he enters professional life. For this reason, starting a Mennonite college that is affiliated with the University of Waterloo is worth the risk.

Indeed. How visionary!¹³

These are just two of our foundational stories that speak to who we are and why we matter. I've often thought Annette Simmons stopped one block short of her taxonomy of foundational stories. We also need an "I would not be here were it not for" kind of story. And because my father is here this evening, I must tell at least one of those for my dad's Canada connections.

One reason I'm here today is that my father was granted special permission as a non-Mennonite (at the time) to enroll as a transfer student in Grade 10 at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ontario in 1947. His dad, my grandfather, A. J. Schultz, was a well-known Baptist minister, a spellbinding storyteller, who took his Gospel "show on the road" complete with lantern slides in Kitchener, Guelph, and New Hamburg, Ontario. For a while, he had a radio show in Guelph called "Morning Meditations." Rev. Schultz was a pacifist and had served on mission fields in Africa with Mennonites. Rockway granted permission for my dad to attend. He had a very persuasive best friend, Bill Klassen, who, after my Dad graduated from Rockway, said: "Schultzy, you don't want to go to Waterloo Lutheran, come to Goshen with me!" And so, as fate would have it, my dad took a night train to check out this Goshen College in the States. There he met my mother—a good, smart Swiss Menno from Holmes County—who could play basketball, debate, cook and sew! The rest, as they say, is history.

Stories are powerful rhetorical resources. In short, one of the best ways I can function publicly as Grebel's president is to enact my own scholarly sensibilities: to pass on Grebel stories—stories that empower and sustain us, challenge us, comfort us, and ultimately celebrate our mission "to seek wisdom, nurture faith and pursue peace and justice in service to church and society."

¹³ Ibid.

Invitational Rhetoric and Identification

My second area of study can be called the invitational quality of rhetoric and the pivotal role of identification. I'm sure many of you remember Robert Frost's poem "The Pasture." It is a wonderful example of the power of invitation. The first stanza reads: "I'm going out to clear the pasture spring; I'll only stop to rake the leaves away/And wait to watch the water clear, I may, I shan't be gone long. You come too." Frost often chose to lead off his public readings with "The Pasture" as a way of introducing himself and inviting the audience to come along on his journey—a purpose for which the poem is perfectly suited, because that's what it is, a friendly, intimate invitation.¹⁴

Rhetoric too at its best is invitational. A kind of "you come to and join me" persuasive opening. Well-crafted rhetoric gives us good reasons to accept an idea. When you receive an invitation to a party, you have a choice whether to accept it or not. Rhetoric is about inviting people to make choices. That is why coercive discourse is not part of the realm of rhetoric, and why rhetoric flourishes only in democratic societies. If I want you to accept my ideas, then I need to "socialize" my reasons. Invitational rhetoric trades on a pivotal term: "identification." The leading rhetorical theorist of the 20th century, Kenneth Burke, established an entire theoretical system around this paradoxical term.¹⁵

Identification is paradoxical because it has two opposite meanings. It means: 1) the state of being distinct, separate, unique, or different. In the advertising world, this is "branding." Products and services and universities need to differentiate themselves from the marketplace, to stand out from the crowd. And it also means: 2) the state of being similar, belonging to, and unifying with. If I say, "I want to identify with my audience," it means I want to relate to you. It is the most fundamental condition for persuasion. In the world of politics, at its crudest level, this is why politicians kiss babies and proclaim they are the "family values candidate." As Burke says, rhetoric functions at the intersection of "segregation" and "congregation."

As a current provocative example, the proposed Quebec Charter of

¹⁴ Robert Frost, "The Pasture," in *Selected Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1963), 5.

¹⁵ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1950), and *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969).

Values that would ban public sector employees from wearing “conspicuous religious symbols”¹⁶ is all about both these meanings of identification. Its supporters are charting a turbulent course between segregation and congregation, though the rhetoric tacks more toward the “tragic” or “separatist” side of the equation. The Charter of Values is separatist in saying that “we need to restrict the expression of extreme religious freedom because it is detrimental to responsible citizenship,” but communal in saying that “we affirm a secular state that is committed to protecting basic human rights for all” and any restrictions on freedom of religious expression “will be implemented humanely.” Opponents of the Charter, often adopting the comedic strategy of humor, have shown the absurdity of some of these strained efforts to narrow provincial identity. Would there be a “measurer-in-chief”? Someone with a ruler to see if any outsized religious garb—a Muslim head covering, a Jewish kippah, a Sikh turban, or an overly large crucifix—would require us to send home a teacher, a constable, or a doctor? Even businesses are getting into the act, saying: “Look, if Quebec doesn’t want a ‘big tent’ of religious diversity, other provinces don’t mind.”¹⁷

As cultural critic Todd Gitlin, author of *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, wryly notes: “Every nation’s nationalism is the search for a principle that distinguishes insiders from outsiders and elevates the former over the latter.” Gary Woodward, a rhetorical theorist and author of *The Idea of Identification*, writes that Quebec has always been a special case study in “the push and pull” of identity rhetorics.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the proposed restriction on religious display in public is tracking about even in Quebec,

¹⁶ The Quebec Charter of Values (QCV) was a proposed bill introduced by the Parti Québécois in September 2013 to end a controversy on “reasonable accommodation.” Some of its provisions included: (1) weakening the fundamental right to freedom of religion and strengthening the supremacy of the French language; (2) limiting the wearing of “conspicuous” religious symbols for all provincial employees; (3) making it mandatory to have one’s face uncovered when providing or receiving a provincial service. The bill died as of the 2014 election won by the Quebec Liberal Party.

¹⁷ A Toronto-area hospital, LakeRidge Health, ran ads in Quebec recruiting health care workers who might be negatively affected should the QCV be enacted. With a picture of beautiful young woman wearing a hijab, the ad boldly announced: “We don’t care what’s on your head. We care what’s in it.”

¹⁸ Gary Woodward, *The Idea of Identification* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003). See especially ch. 6, “Identification and Commitment in Civic Culture,” 121-34, where Gitlin is cited.

with 43 percent in support of the measure and 42 percent opposed. Even here in Ontario, 40 percent approve similar measures to those in the PQ's Charter.¹⁹ Lest we think the idea of restricting religious head coverings in public is all very silly, remember the reason that Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church exists today.²⁰

As a rhetorical critic, I am fascinated by cases like this one. I examine how people use rhetoric for tragic purposes (courting difference and exclusivity) and how people use rhetoric for comedic purposes (seeking assimilation and inclusivity). I also examine how some people use identification in tragi-comic or delightfully subversive ways, and I will come back to that use in my last point.

I want to share with you now a very powerful example of the way identification was used in an extraordinarily inventive way in one of America's darkest hours. It concerns the tragic and senseless death of Martin Luther King, Jr., and how the news of his death was communicated by Robert F. Kennedy



*Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.
Public domain photograph.*

¹⁹ Tu Thanh Ha, "PQ Charter of Values Better Received by Francophones, Poll Shows," *The Globe and Mail*, Sept. 16, 2013, accessed at www.theglobeandmail.com. Sahar Fatima, "Most Canadians Opposed Firings Based on Quebec's Secular Charter, Poll," *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 1, 2013, accessed at www.theglobeandmail.com.

²⁰ Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario was formed when about half the members of First Mennonite Church broke away in 1924 over several issues, including policy regarding head coverings for women. Some Mennonite women who worked outside the home were receiving pressure from employers to remove their caps and bonnets while on the job. They asked their church leaders to relax the ruling on head coverings. When it came to a vote in First Mennonite Church, the bishops narrowly defeated the measure. Many families representing the women and their petition—nearly half the church—then split to form Stirling, moving just a block away. See J. Winfield Fretz, *The Waterloo Mennonites: A Community in Paradox* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1989).

on one of his campaign stops in Indianapolis.

One hour after King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, Kennedy, then a presidential contender campaigning in Indianapolis, received the grim news. Kennedy scuttled his scheduled speech in the heart of the city, resisted advice from the police and his own handlers to “get the heck out of Dodge,” walked into the ghetto of that city alone, called out for people to follow him, climbed into the back of a pickup, and in a cold night with a howling wind, delivered an impromptu speech to an audience of around 1,000 mostly black citizens who had no idea King was dead.

Joe Klein, political columnist for *Time* magazine and author of *Politics Lost*, gives us a front row seat to view the riveting audience reactions of Kennedy delivering the news of King’s death.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’m only going to speak to you for one or two minutes tonight because I have sad news. I have sad news for you, for all of our fellow citizens and for people who love peace all over the world. And that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee.” *[At this point, there were screams, wailing—just the rawest, most visceral sounds of pain that human voices can summon. As the screams died, Kennedy resumed, slowly, pausing frequently, measuring his words.]* “Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings and he died in the cause of that effort.” *[There was total silence now.]*

“In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black—considering the evidence, evidently there were white people who were responsible.” *[A shudder went through the crowd at the powerful unadorned word: responsible.]*

“You can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization—black people amongst blacks, and white

amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and comprehend, and to replace the stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love. For those of you who are black, and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel ... I feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man.” [*This is the first time that Robert Kennedy had ever spoken publicly of the death of his brother, John F. Kennedy.*]

“We have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond these rather difficult times. My favorite poem, favorite poet, was Aeschylus. He once wrote: ‘Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the human heart. Until in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.’ What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness but love and wisdom and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice for those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.

“So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King—yes, that’s true—but more importantly, to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love, a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.”

“We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times; we’ve had difficult times in the past. And we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; and it is not the end of disorder. But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in

this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land.”
[Someone shouted YAY! There were other shouts of approval.]

“Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that ... and say a prayer for our country, and for our people.”

Here’s the remarkable thing: *[Over the next few days, there were riots in 76 American cities. Forty-six people died, 2,500 were injured, 28,000 jailed ... Indianapolis remained quiet.]*²¹

Through an astonishing assortment of unifying identification strategies—astonishing, because this was an impromptu speech, “off the cuff” and not scripted—Kennedy appeals to common values of a healthy democratic society (love, wisdom, compassion, justice, and gentleness). He offers his own painful story of losing a brother. And he invokes poetry and prayer to affirm community, reject hatred, and prevent a riot. In addition, Kennedy quickly and astutely sizes up his rather immense rhetorical obstacles—those challenges separating him from his audience. He is white, his audience black; he is from a privileged background, his audience from the working class; he represents power, they powerlessness. Yet he knows that despite these major differences, he shares with his audience one major affiliation—a common friend—Martin Luther King. With adept authenticity, Kennedy abandons a political role jockeying for competitive advantage and assumes the role of Everyman—a selfless unifier and promoter of the common good. And it works, brilliantly.

²¹ This is the opening story I tell students in my book, co-authored with Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Thomas R. Burkholder, *The Rhetorical Act: Thinking, Speaking and Writing Critically* (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015) to illustrate the power of identification and to dispel the notion that there’s talk and then there’s action. See “Prelude,” in the book’s 4th and 5th editions, where this riveting story is recounted as an example that words are done in deeds and that rhetoric itself is action (hence the book’s title). See also Joe Klein, *Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized by People Who Think You’re Stupid* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 1-24.



Collage created by author.

Subversive Discourse and Rhetorical Underdogs

The third related area of my research program is the brazenness of subversive discourse and the study of “rhetorical underdogs.” Let’s start with something very simple. We all like underdogs! If you were a kid in the 1960s and ’70s, you remember the cartoon “Underdog!” Many archetypal stories such as “the tortoise and the hare” also feature a “come from behind” winner. Even the well-known biblical story of David and Goliath encourages us to root for the underdog. Malcolm Gladwell, the celebrated Canadian writer and *The New Yorker* columnist who has many bestsellers—*The Tipping Point* and *Outliers* among them—is on the cover of a recent *Maclean’s* magazine promoting his new book, appropriately titled *David and Goliath*. It is a collection of case studies that promotes “the secret power of the underdog.”²² In politics, the underdog theme won John F. Kennedy a Pulitzer prize for *Profiles in Courage*.

²² See Malcolm Gladwell, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* (New York: Little Brown, 2013).

One of my favorite stories from that book is the man who performed in 1868 what one historian has called “the most heroic act in American history, incomparably more difficult than any deed of valor upon the field of battle.” This was Edmund G. Ross, a Republican US Senator from Kansas whose vote saved President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat, from impeachment.²³

I have studied many rhetorical underdogs from the early woman’s rights movements, the anti-slavery movement, the civil rights movement, and the peace movement, including Angelina Grimké, Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw, Mary Woolstonecraft, Marget Fuller, Jeanette Rankin, Jane Addams, Dorothy Day, and Ida B. Wells, among others.²⁴ What makes these advocates rhetorical underdogs is the following: 1) they are “no name” rhetoricians who defy the odds, overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges; 2) they exist at the margins of society; 3) they are trying to empower others at the margins (what we call “exercising rhetorical agency”)²⁵; and 4) most significantly, because they have little to lose, they often engage in a risky venture called “subversive discourse.”

What is “subversion”? The term sometimes gets a bad rap. It is not best defined as the sinister, anarchist overthrow of a government—though in its malevolent extremes it can become that. Rather, it is best defined as nonconformity or counter-culture. Subversion is one of the four principal motives of all communication, according to rhetorical theorist Walter Fisher, who names them as “affirmation, reaffirmation, purification and subversion.” Subversion is “the undermining of a prevailing idea.” It is crafting “normative disruption.”²⁶ Subversion may be the very principle of rhetorical invention,

²³ John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1956).

²⁴ See for example, Susan Schultz Huxman, “Perfecting the Rhetorical Vision of Woman’s Rights: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna Howard Shaw, and Carrie Chapman Catt,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 307-36; Susan Schultz Huxman, “Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller and Angelina Grimke: Symbolic Convergence and a Nascent Rhetorical Vision,” *Communication Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (1996): 16-28; Susan Schultz Huxman, “Jeanette Rankin,” “Jane Addams,” “Dorothy Day,” biographical stories and analysis in *Landmark Speeches in U. S. Pacifism* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M Univ. Press, in press).

²⁵ Rhetorical agency is a potent concept to explain both the struggles and the successes of women rhetors promoting causes at the margins of society. See, for instance, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 1-19.

²⁶ Walter Fisher, “A Motive View of Communication,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970):

according to feminist rhetorical critic Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. She avers that subversion demands “using the master’s tools to undermine, even sabotage, the master’s house.” Only through “symbolic reversals” can consciousness be raised and received wisdom be turned upside down.²⁷

In short, I study subversive rhetors who “speak truth to power,” who show great courage in impacting social change and religious faithfulness. My first brazen and subversive underdog story is about a woman named Angelina Grimké. What an unlikely reformer she was. Born into privilege in 1805 in Charleston, South Carolina to a wealthy slaveholding family, Angelina had every comfort imaginable. She was the youngest of 14 kids, educated by private tutors, raised as a devout Episcopalian, and doted on by her parents and siblings. Yet she was restive. She and her older sister Sarah were particularly disturbed by the practice of slavery. So, even though state laws forbade teaching slaves to read or write, the sisters created an underground school on their own plantation. Grimké’s diary describes these sessions with



Angelina Grimké (left) and Sarah Grimké. Public domain photograph.

131-39.

²⁷ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Inventing Women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 21, no. 12 (1998): 111.

supreme satisfaction: “The light was put out, the keyhole screened, and flat on our stomachs, with the spelling-book under our eyes, we defied the laws of South Carolina.” The girls were discovered by their father and severely lectured. Rather than give up and be dutiful children, they ran away, took up residence in Philadelphia, and joined the Quakers and the anti-slavery cause. There, in 1836 at the age of 31, Angelina and her sister published a letter entitled “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South.” In it they urged southern women to do the unthinkable: “to persuade your husband, father, brothers, and sons that slavery is a crime against God and man.” That line was considered heretical. As pamphlets were disseminated in South Carolina, the Charleston authorities warned Angelina and Sarah that they would be arrested if they ever returned to their hometown. The postmaster burned copies of the letter.

Undaunted, Angelina discovered public speaking, though in the 1830s it was considered unseemly for women to speak to men in public places. In 1837, in Amesbury, Massachusetts she engaged in a series of debates on the slavery question—the first public debates between a man and a woman in the United States. But it was a hot May evening in Philadelphia in 1838 which became Angelina’s swan song in her struggle for human rights. Two days after her marriage to a fellow reformer in the anti-slavery cause, Angelina accepted an invitation to speak at the Dedication of Pennsylvania Hall—a splendid, gaslit structure with the motto “Virtue, Liberty, Independence” carved in gold letters over the stage. In publicity leading up to the event, she was denounced in the papers by the Massachusetts clergy as “a Godless woman,” a “he-woman,” even “the devil incarnate.” Before the ceremonies could unfold, an angry, howling mob formed in the streets. When a black woman, Maria Mitchell, got up to introduce her, the crowd inside booed and hollered; the mob outside threw bricks and rotten tomatoes through the windows. Mitchell fainted, and the crowd erupted with laughter and ridicule. Calmly, Angelina Grimké arose from her seat, gazing around the large hall with such unnerving intensity that the crowd momentarily quieted.

She began in an unconventional way—by challenging her audience’s very presence. “Men, brethren, and fathers—mothers, daughters and sisters, what came ye out for to see? A reed shaken in the wind? Is it curiosity merely or a deep sympathy with the perishing slave that has brought this large audience together?” At this, someone yelled “FIRE!” People ran. Heavy stones

thudded against the windows. Angelina kept speaking. She continued, this time by scolding her audience, turning the tables, appropriating the words of Jesus and adopting a radical prophet role—all entirely subversive rhetorical choices, especially for women. “Deluded beings! They know not what they do. Do you ask: What has the North to do with Slavery? Hear it—hear it. Those voices without tell us that the spirit of slavery is here!”

Elsewhere in this courageous speech she says: “Animated with hope, nay, with an assurance of the triumph of liberty and good will to man, I will lift up my voice like a trumpet and show this people their transgression; their sins of omission toward the slave and what they can do towards affecting southern mind and overthrowing Southern oppression. . . . We may talk of occupying neutral ground, but on this subject in its present attitude, there is no such thing as neutral ground. He that is not for us is against us and he that gathereth not with us, scattereth abroad.” At this, more shouting and stones are thrown against the windows. Amidst the hostile crowd, Angelina spoke for over an hour. She closed with a brazen appeal for women to become agents of change. “Women of Philadelphia . . . allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let me urge you to petition. . . . When the women of these States send up to congress such a petition, our legislators will arise as did those of England and say: ‘When all the maids and matrons of the land are knocking at our doors, we must legislate.’”

Later that evening, the mob burned the new hall to the ground. Angelina received countless threats on her life. Speaking truth to power is dangerous business. Ill health forced her to retire shortly after this impassioned, radical speech. Though she raised three children, she was bedridden for years. Still, what a debt of gratitude we owe to this moral voice who dared speak truth to power on behalf of women and slaves, fully 30 years before the Civil War.²⁸

Convergence of Scholarly Themes: Mennonite Rhetoric in World War I

My final story features a rhetorical medley—a real platypus case—of all three of my scholarly interests. It is at once 1) subversive, speaking truth to power in ways that disrupt, provoke, and confound; 2) an exemplar of the

²⁸ See Susan Schultz Huxman, “Angelina Grimké: Material for Analysis, chapter 8,” in *The Rhetorical Act*, 5th ed., 212-16.

paradox of identification—an unusual rendering of the warp and woof of segregation and congregation; and 3) a riveting underdog story that teaches a nonconformist way to preserve a group's identity in the midst of tumult and crisis.

I'm talking about the way in which Mennonites, "the Quiet in the Land" people, launched a rather sophisticated public relations campaign to defend themselves in World War I. I first became fascinated with Mennonites as rhetorical creatures at my alma mater, Bethel College in Kansas, the oldest Mennonite institution of higher learning in North America. It was a Mennonite history class—a class I really didn't want to take—that provided the spark for my future scholarly inquiry.²⁹ The final unit, American Mennonites and War, made an indelible impression on me. The course culminated with a film that celebrated Mennonite steadfast devotion to faith in the face of war. The only note I took that day was a statement made by



Mennonite men marching, likely at Camp Funston, Kansas, ca. 1918. Photo credit: Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

²⁹ As a basketball player at Bethel, I could not travel that year during "Inter-term" as I did in other years. The options for courses seemed bleak to me. I was an English major, but since I was close to a History minor, I opted for this course about Mennonites and War.

its narrator, a Mennonite historian: “War is good for Mennonites,” he said. “It brings out their best.” In the margin of my notebook I scribbled: “What? You’ve got to be kidding.” Eight years later I wrote a dissertation for my PhD in Communication at the University of Kansas which explored that very subject. I have been writing about rhetoric and Mennonite faithfulness to church and state ever since.³⁰

I want to share with you some inspiring examples of self-defense rhetoric from Mennonite apologists, specifically from the Mennonite crisis of citizenship in the US during the Great War (as it was then called). From these men and women of faith, we see unusual, counter-cultural “apologia” using the rhetoric of self-defense that defy the standard strategies to repair one’s image found in a classic crisis consultant’s manual.³¹

Mennonites chose a very different approach to crisis, one that does not seek to respond to accusation by peddling in manipulation for the purpose of winning. In that sense it is truly a nonconformist, subversive approach to repairing an image, akin to how Jesus plays the exemplar apologist in

³⁰ Susan Schultz Huxman, “In the World, But Not of It: Mennonite Rhetoric in World War I as an Enactment of Paradox” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1987); Susan Schultz Huxman, “Mennonite Rhetoric in World War I: A Case Study in the Conflict between Ideological Commitments and Rhetorical Choices,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 16, no. 1 (1993): 41-54; Susan Schultz Huxman, “Mennonite Rhetoric in World War I: Lobbying the Government for Freedom of Conscience,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 67 (1993): 283-303; Susan Schultz Huxman, “The Tragi-Comic Rhetorical ‘Dance’ of Marginalized Groups: The Case of Mennonites in the Great War,” *Southern Communication Journal* 62, no. 4 (1997), 305-18; Susan Schultz Huxman and Gerald Mast, “In the World but Not of It: Mennonite Traditions as Resources for Rhetorical Invention,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 4 (2004): 539-54.

³¹ Apologia, the rhetoric of self-defense, is a peculiar genre of speech first identified by Aristotle. Even he was puzzled about how to categorize the speech of self-defense. He never dignified the rhetorical form by giving it separate species status, but he noted that an apologia shares features from all three classical genres: forensic (legal), deliberative (political), and epideictic (ceremonial) discourse. Many strategies put forth by image-repair consultants are shrewd and manipulative, and aim to exonerate the accused regardless of facts. For a detailed look at how Mennonites used a subversive approach to image repair in the Great War akin to Jesus’ role with the adulteress in John 8, see Susan Schultz Huxman, “Leadership and Crisis Communication: Whither Faith?” Keynote speech delivered to Canadian Council of Christian Charities Conference: “Orthopraxy: Infusing Faith into Practice,” Mississauga, Ontario, Sept, 25, 2013. Available from the author and from the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (www.cccc.org).

John 8. The story there—his encounter with the adulteress, Jewish leaders, and Jewish law—is a common rhetorical pattern for how Jesus responds to challenges from skeptics throughout the New Testament.³² In encounter after encounter with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and with Pilate, he turns the tables on challenges made by his accusers. In the adulteress parable, his defense utilizes the resources of paradox. It is at once engaging and disengaging; Jesus stands up to address the Jewish leaders—but not before a long pause where he is stooped over, “[writing] with his finger in the sand,” and he returns to that pose. He affirms the law, yet challenges it (“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her”). It is a disarming lesson that bewilders and embarrasses (his accusers “went away, one by one”).

How did Mennonites use this as a kind of recipe for handling charges that they were un-American for not fighting a war to save democracy? The seeds of paradox as a model for defending the faith are found in the Schleithem (1527) and Dordrecht (1632) confessions of faith. From Schleithem: “The sword is an ordering of God, but outside the perfection of Christ.” From Dordrecht: “Be ye in the world but not of it.” Mennonites defended their position of non-resistance using these resources to craft an unusual, counter-culture model of self-defense. Still, how does one use these resources of paradox to defend oneself, especially when facing a daunting accusatory climate?

Mennonites had three strikes against them. Strike one: This was “the mother of all wars.” There was no escape. National conscription was passed into law for the first time in the US. Strike two: America discovered the power of propaganda. This war used advertising to create an intense, unifying militaristic patriotism for which there was no comparison: “Buy Liberty Bonds,” “Fly the American Flag,” “Contribute to the American Red Cross,” “Support Uncle Sam,” “Enlist Today,” “Speak the American Language.” Post Office warnings even said “Speak the American language—not the English language.” If you don’t comply, you’re a “coward,” a “slacker,” a “parasite,” and “pro-German.” Strike three: Mennonites were not known as charismatic leaders, savvy public relations people, or shrewd lobbyists. They were, after all, often referred to as “the Quiet in the Land.” Mennonite pastors often said,

³² Scriptural quotations are from the NRSV.

“We do not have gifts for this sort of thing.”³³

Usually it's three strikes and you're out. Yet Mennonites weren't quite out. Remarkably, they didn't adopt the two responses typical of their heritage when under attack: flee or stoically endure persecution. What did they do to defend themselves? What did their damage-control campaign look like? First, it may surprise you that they did have such a campaign. Numbering around 80,000, Mennonites in 1917 America were a Christian conservative people who practiced nonresistance and nonconformity. They envisioned America's involvement in the Great War as their ancestors four-and-a-half centuries earlier had envisioned all war—not as a righteous crusade but as a violent storm that would disrupt their peaceful lives. Yet these Mennonites were quite different from their European ancestors in other respects. By the turn of the century, they had begun to show signs of mainstream denominationalism. They had become acculturated to the American way of life and saw themselves as American citizens. For the first time, they professed that they could be both faithful church members and loyal citizens. Before the war, that didn't seem to be much of a problem. After the war, when loyalty to country could only be defined as support of the war, this double identity became almost impossible.³⁴

It is from this context that any thought of a public relations campaign could arise. So, what did they do to defend themselves? How did they respond to the accusations, the threats of physical violence in their home communities, and the strong-arm tactics by local government bent on arresting them for violating the Espionage and Sedition Acts? I suggest that their campaign to defend themselves consisted of three parts.

First, Mennonites formed a lobby on Capitol Hill within two weeks of America's entry into the war. This was a shocking departure from the low profile, apolitical role of their forebears. A disarming response, really. Four committees were formed: the Citizenship Committee, the Committee on Information, the Committee of Seven, and the War Problems Committee. These committees were spearheaded by emerging PR specialists from among Mennonite colleges, publishing houses, farmers, lawyers, business owners,

³³ Susan Schultz Huxman, “In the World, But Not of It,” chapter 6, “On the Defensive: Mennonites Seek Reappraisal of Their Image,” 148-231.

³⁴ James Juhnke, *A People of Two Kingdoms* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1975).

newspaper editors, ministers, and even included a state senator. These Mennonite apologists abandoned their insular low profile and “besieged Washington with letters and petitions pleading for the legal acknowledgment of religious conscientious objection.”³⁵

Second, Mennonite apologists adopted a shrewd sense of place, understanding how to diffuse conflict by *where* they engaged their accusers. They negotiated a clever strategy to lessen conflict with government officials by encouraging Mennonite men and boys to register and report to camp. Even though no provisions had been made in 1917 for noncombatant service, Mennonites might have refused to enter a military system with no definite policy for nonresisters. But Mennonite men mostly did report to camp. In doing so, they helped the government meet its goal of getting all American draftees through the draft boards as quickly and efficiently as possible. In bowing to the demands of government in this situation, Mennonites had a better opportunity to make exemption demands later.

Mennonites also seemed to understand a sophisticated rhetorical principle, namely that the place where one engages in a rhetorical contest is important. Because they wanted a uniform treatment of their nonresistance stance, they thought they would receive a more sympathetic hearing removed from local politics, and any showdown between drill sergeants and Mennonite boys would be removed from their communities and out of their churches.

Third, Mennonites tossed caution to the wind and waged a rhetorical battle on two fronts to preserve their double identity as Americans and Mennonites. This both-and response to crisis was complicated and confounding. They used the church press to show people how to remain faithful Mennonites in the face of unrelenting pressure to conform to the war effort. They published pocket-size tracts of biblical passages of nonresistance for drafted men to memorize, carry in their wallets, and use at draft boards. They said things like, “It is better to die a martyr’s death than give up our faith in Bible nonresistance.” But they also used the church press to show members how to be loyal Americans in difficult times, how to contribute to the Red Cross, why it was important to suspend speaking German in some

³⁵ Susan Schultz Huxman, “In the World, But Not of It,” chapter 5, “Taking a Cautious Offensive: Mennonites Confront the Government,” 110-32.

places, and how farmers were “patriots” in providing food for the war. “We realize that it is difficult for the government to deal with people like us,” they said. “Since we cannot serve in the armed forces, we can help our country in so many other ways.”³⁶

These contrasting rhetorical responses—one seeking separation, the other assimilation—come together in a most paradoxical way when some Mennonite men who reported to camp agreed to wear the uniform and march under a drill sergeant, but carry brooms and not guns. (The photo on page 240 is one of my most favorite images: so inventive, invitational, paradoxical, and subversive.)

Here is one account of conviction and courage that puts the Mennonite nonconformist apologetic stance in sharp perspective. It has been called the “flag story” and features a Mennonite minister and farmer from Kansas named Bernard Harder. The story takes place on the Harder farm near Whitewater, a rural farming community. In April 1918 at the height of US involvement in World War I, a mob decided to go to Harder’s home and force him to put up an American flag.



The Harders. Photo credit: Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

³⁶ Ibid., chapter 7, “Keeping the Faith: Mennonites Reaffirm Their Image,” 233-85. Direct quotes are from the most influential and official church papers of the time: *The Gospel Herald*, edited by Daniel Kauffman; *The Mennonite*, edited by S.M. Grubb; *Der Herold*, edited by C.E. Krehbiel; *The Christian Evangel*, edited by Benjamin Esch; and *The Christian Monitor*, edited by H. Frank Reist.

Harder received a tip that this disgruntled group was coming. He strode out to meet it on the steps of his porch after watching the parade of local citizens make their way up his property. The mob angrily demanded he put up a flag. Harder agreed. Then he asked some technical questions about the proper way to mount and fly the flag. Did anyone bring a flagpole? No. Well, if you fly a flag, doesn't it need to be properly cared for? Taken down each night? One man, clearly irritated by the delay, said, "Just hang it with nails." Harder replied: "Won't the flag rip off in the Kansas wind?" The response: "It doesn't matter." So the flag was mounted on the rafters of the porch with nails. Then one man shouted: "Let's sing 'America.'" Harder readily joined in. In fact he continued to sing the other verses of the song. Since the mob only knew the words of the first one, he was the sole person singing all four verses. Subdued, the mob retreated from his property.³⁷

I think you can see the lessons from the flag story. The story disarms the opposition in much the way Jesus' encounter with the adulteress does. Just as Jesus' accusers silently leave when pressed with his words, Harder's accusers are at first baffled by his willingness to hang a flag and to engage them on proper respect for handling it, and then silenced when they cannot sing more than one verse of a patriotic song. The flag story utilizes paradox as a rhetorical resource. It serves as a mediating bridge between Anabaptist doctrine and American political values. It sidesteps difficult either-or questions of identity, by implying that no one is in a position to judge another. The story underscores the importance of where to address the adversary in order to minimize conflict. Importantly, the mob encounter does not take place in the minister's church or the town square, nor even inside his home, but on the steps of his porch. In all likelihood Harder would not have acquiesced to hanging a flag in his church; nor would the mob have retreated in silence, leaving the minister singing, had they been surrounded by onlookers in the town square.

In addition the flag story redefines success. The response is one that confounds and bewilders. The story does not elaborate on the minister's status

³⁷ See Schultz Huxman and Mast, "In the World but Not of It: Mennonite Traditions as Resources for Rhetorical Invention," 547-48, and Mark Unruh, "A Story of Faith and the Flag: A Study of Mennonite Fantasy Rhetoric," *Mennonite Life* 57, no. 3 (2002): archive.bethelks.edu.

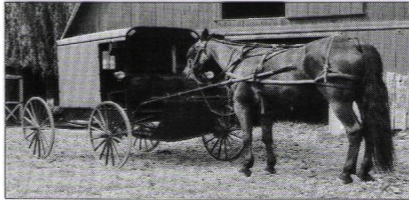
in the surrounding community after this incident (it is doubtful he was ever judged a true patriot by outsiders), but for the Mennonite faith community, the story's comforting implication is that the minister's witness of national loyalty was a more deeply rooted patriotism that does not depend on war fever to nourish it. In all, the story serves as a touchstone apologia for a people of faith intent on following the Prince of Peace. It plausibly expresses the idea that American Mennonites can be pacifists and patriots, but in ways that gently yet boldly "speak truth to power."³⁸

Conclusion

As we come to 2014 and the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of World War I, I look forward to continuing this line of research, to examining how Mennonites in the US and Canada forged two seemingly contradictory identities in rhetorically sophisticated and nonconformist ways. The Mennonites' WW I story is a crucible of faith and faithfulness. It is a timeless, compelling, and high stakes story. It is a nonconformist story, a subversive story, an underdog story, and a confounding story of identification—in both its tragic (separatist themes) and comedic (assimilative) elements.

As a postscript, I should note that the Mennonite countercultural

Ask Some Mennonites
To Hitch Up A Horse And
Buggy, And You'll Either
Have A Confused Horse,
Or A Very Strange Ride.



If you think all Mennonites look, think, and live the same, you better think again. Ask this poor horse what we mean. He'll tell you all Mennonites are not alike. The Mennonite church is made up of all types and is open to all. To be a Mennonite you just have to be committed to Jesus Christ and His people. It's as simple, as hard, and as complicated as that.



THE MENNONITE CHURCHES.
OUR FAMILY CAN BE YOUR FAMILY.

Congregation name and i.d.

*Reprinted with permission of Menno Media,
Harrisonburg, VA.*

³⁸ The phrase "speak truth to power" was first coined by Quakers as early as the 17th century. But it was a 1955 publication of the American Friends Service Committee entitled "Speak Truth to Power," a 70-page document proposing a new approach to the Cold War, that gave this expression rhetorical currency among protest rhetors, especially Christian pacifists.

storyline is still evident today in our advertising campaigns. Check out the example on page 247 of rhetorical mischief which trades on subversiveness even as it embraces a comedic form of identification. The funny photo of a horse hitched up backward to a buggy entices the reader to digest these clever lines at the bottom: “Ask some Mennonites to hitch up a horse and buggy and you’ll either have a confused horse, or a very strange ride.” It continues: “If you think all Mennonites look, think and live the same, you better think again. Ask this poor horse what we mean. He’ll tell you all Mennonites are not alike.” Then the invitational pitch: “You know us as the Mennonites, but do you really know us? This Sunday take a face-to-face look at a church that may surprise you. The Mennonite churches. Our family can be your family.”

From subversive twists on familiar fairytales and ads poking fun at Mennonite stereotypes to marginalized voices of civil rights and peace that dare to “speak truth to power,” I have sought to animate my guiding scholarly principles: the power of stories to persuade; the invitational quality of rhetoric and the paradox of identification; and the brazenness of subversive discourse from rhetorical underdogs.

Thank you for your attentiveness to my wide-ranging subject this evening. Thank you also for supporting one of Grebel’s 50 events to celebrate 50 fabulous years!

Susan Schultz Huxman is Professor and President, Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario.

APPENDIX

**Speaking Truth to Power:
Profiles of Rhetorical Courage for Church and Society
The Study of Rhetoric**

RHETORIC Rhetoric is the art of using symbols; the study of all the processes by which people influence each other through verbal, nonverbal, visual, and aural symbols; discourse that is addressed; the craft of producing reason-giving discourse grounded in social truths.

RHETORICAL CRITICISM Rhetorical criticism is specialized feedback, a process that occurs in stages—description, interpretation, and evaluation—in order to understand why rhetorical acts succeed or fail.

RHETORICAL GENRES Rhetorical genres are a species or type of speech. Aristotle described three such types or genres: deliberative (political); forensic (legal); and epideictic (ceremonial). This categorization, while limited to Western sensibilities, is still useful today.

RHETORICAL HYBRIDS The rules of a rhetorical genre may be purposely violated or subverted when people want to agitate powerfully for a cause, jolt audiences out of complacency, or attract media attention. These rhetorical acts are hybrids.

IDENTIFICATION Identification is a paradox at the heart of rhetorical action. It means both establishing a common bond with others and distinguishing oneself from others. Identification is about courting similarity and difference. It involves appealing to unity with audiences, to uniqueness and difference, and to branding and bonding.

WHY STUDY RHETORIC? (1) Intellectual reasons: Humans are “homo narrans,” the storytelling creature. Studying rhetoric reveals the diverse ways in which discourse forms communities and sharpens moral sensibilities. (2) Citizenship reasons: Rhetorical competence is “equipment for living” in society. (3) Professional reasons: Speech competence is central to success in most careers.

—Susan Schultz Huxman

From “Creation Care” to “Watershed Discipleship”: Re-Placing Ecological Theology and Practice

Ched Myers

A few years ago, Paul Kingsnorth, a British environmental analyst, wrote this:

Sitting on the desk in front of me are a set of graphs. The horizontal axis of each graph is identical: it represents time, from the years 1750 to 2000. The graphs show, variously, human population levels, CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere, exploitation of fisheries, destruction of tropical forests, paper consumption, number of motor vehicles, water use, the rate of species extinction and the totality of the gross domestic product of the human economy. What grips me about these graphs . . . is that though they all show very different things, they have an almost identical shape. A line begins on the left of the page, rising gradually as it moves to the right. Then, in the last inch or so — around the year 1950 — it suddenly veers steeply upwards. . . . The root cause of all these trends is the same: a rapacious human economy which is bringing the world very swiftly to the brink of chaos. We know this; some of us even attempt to stop it happening. Yet all of these trends continue to get rapidly worse, and there is no sign of that changing soon. . . .¹

Kingsnorth crystallizes concisely the meaning of our historical moment and the essential rationale for my proposal in this paper.²

The deep and broad ecological crisis stalking human history for centuries has now arrived in the interlocking catastrophes of climate

¹ *The Guardian* August 18, 2009, www.monbiot.com/2009/08/18/should-we-seek-to-save-industrial-civilisation/.

² This is an edited, expanded version of a paper given at the Mennonite Scholars and Friends Forum at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature meetings on Nov. 23, 2013 in Baltimore, Maryland.

destruction, habitat degradation, species extinction, and resource exhaustion (the so-called "peak everything"). Sober and scientific assessments of this crisis are converging in a consensus that the civilizational project is well down the road of an "endgame," whether we yet feel it existentially or not.³ This dark ecological horizon has generated a spectrum of cultural moods, from pessimistic brooding or slow-burn despair to narcissistic resignation or determined technocratic optimism. In radical environmental circles, assessments of dwindling prospects often take on a decidedly apocalyptic tenor.

Thomas Merton's dictum, uttered under the shadow of an earlier, equally foreboding apocalyptic moment (the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis), offers an evangelical challenge to churches in this hour. "Christian hope," he wrote, "*begins* where every other hope stands frozen stiff before the face of the Unspeakable."⁴ Whether Merton is right depends upon Christians choosing between discipleship and denial. Our faith and practice from now on will unfold either in light of or in spite of the ecological crisis. This paper explores the former trajectory, hoping to dissuade co-religionists from perpetuating the latter one.

I. Transition Faith

The most constructive public discourse for awakening citizens to "responsibility" in the face of these inconvenient truths is that of the growing "Transition" movement. Scarcely a decade old, it is a "grassroots network of local communities that are working to build ecological resilience in response to peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability."⁵ Timothy Gorringer and Rosie Beckham observe that this approach "tries to steer between the apocalyptic (social chaos, local warlordism) and the starry eyed

³ Derrick Jensen, *Endgame*, volumes I and II (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006). See especially James Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2008).

⁴ Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1966), 4.

⁵ At www.transitionnetwork.org. The contemporary manifesto is Rob Hoskins, *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008). Hoskins is a permaculture designer. A pioneering work was John William Bennett, *The Ecological Transition: Cultural Anthropology and Human Adaptation* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1976/2006). See also www.transitionus.org.

(hi tech, zero carbon)” versions of an energy-descending future. Churches, they argue, must “highlight how consonant the emphases of Transition are with the Christian narrative” while acknowledging that churches “can learn a great deal from engagement in this movement.”⁶ I agree. My proposal is predicated upon the conviction that every aspect of our faith and practice must be re-evaluated in terms of a Transition ethos. The church’s urgent vocation must become, as Dorothy Day put it, to help “build a new world in the shell of the old.”

A proliferation of books, classes, and conferences on eco-theology, popularized through “Creation Care” and “earth spirituality” movements, has gained wide traction among Christians.⁷ Indeed, environmental stewardship is arguably the fastest growing area of public concern among North American churches, initially among mainstream Catholics and Protestants, and increasingly evangelicals and Anabaptists as well.⁸ The Creation Care trend has been necessary to help recalibrate our theology; it is not yet sufficient in its responses to the creation crisis we now face everywhere.

On one hand, many environmental theologies are still overly abstract and insufficiently contextual.⁹ On the other, too often the practical translations of Creation Care are merely cosmetic: congregations “go green” by recycling, light bulb changes, or community gardening, while avoiding

⁶ Timothy Gorringer and Rosie Beckham, *The Transition Movement for Churches: A Prophetic Imperative for Today* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2013). UK theologian Gorringer shares my interest in bioregionalism as a constructive paradigm.

⁷ The literature is too voluminous to cite, but see the comprehensive bibliography online at The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale: <http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/christianity/bibliography/>.

⁸ See, e.g., www.webofcreation.org; <http://earthministry.org>; www.creationcare.org; and www.blessedearth.org, to name just two. The inevitable counter-reaction is underway among conservatives: see e.g., <http://standupforthetruth.com/hot-topics/environmental-movement/> and the duplicitous “greenwashing” of www.cornwallalliance.org.

⁹ There are many exceptions. Larry Rasmussen, for example, is a pioneer in eco-theology and ethics, and his *Earth-honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012) heralds an important new turn. Eco-feminist theologies, such as those of Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992) and Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), argue for the centrality of the incarnational and the somatic.

political controversies such as Tar Sands extraction.¹⁰ We must keep shaping approaches that are both radical (diagnosing the root pathologies within and around us and drawing deeply on our faith tradition) and practical.

The core paradigms and presumptions that gave rise to the “anthropocene” are precisely what must be overturned.¹¹ To characterize these in broad brush: every symptom of the modern ecological crisis can be traced to three interrelated philosophical errors in western Christendom that have underwritten histories of domination over the last 500 years:

1. A functional docetism has numbed Christians to the escalating horrors of both social and ecological violence. If spiritual (or doctrinal) matters trump terrestrial or somatic ones, Creation is pillaged accordingly, since it is assumed that salvation occurs outside it or beyond it.
2. The anthropological presumption that humans rule over Creation (shared with equal ferocity by religious traditionalists and secular modernists) rationalizes how modern technological development has exploited and re-engineered nature to benefit human settlement alone (increasingly only the elite).
3. A theology and/or politics of “divinely ordained” entitlement to land and resources—both in the colonizing and extractive senses—categorically rejects any suggestion that our production and consumption should be proscribed, and relieves us of responsibility for restoring degraded land and biotic (including human) communities.

What these three “articles of modern faith” have in common is a fantasy

¹⁰ A case in point was a Feb. 25, 2014 day of briefings and “dialogue” for a hundred faith leaders from across the political and religious spectrum at the White House, co-hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency. It focused on pragmatic initiatives only; the controversial Keystone XL pipeline project was never broached (see a report at http://clbsj.org/?page_id=8).

¹¹ The term popularized by Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen has become shorthand for humans’ over-determining impact on nature. For an overview and introductory videos, see www.anthropocene.info/en/home; for “maps” of this new reality, see <http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/programs/conservation-and-development/mapping-the-anthropocene>.

of human autonomy that refuses the imperative of creatureliness—to live within the limits *of* the earth—despite the claim of the Genesis account that we were birthed *from* the earth.¹² Docetic dis-embodiment has engendered a culture of displaced and displacing mobility, severing us from rootedness in particular places while facilitating the conquest and colonization of homelands and habitats of others. Presumptive androcentrism has allowed the earth and her lifeforms to be turned into commodities to be extracted, owned, traded, consumed, and disposed of. Entitled ownership has justified bankrupting the earth's natural fertility and privatizing her commonwealth.

The task of eco-theology is to critique and combat these pathologies constructively and practically, not just deconstructively and ideologically. This requires approaches that are robustly incarnational rather than docetic, symbiotic rather than Promethean, and sustainable rather than selfish. If the root of our historic crisis lies in our alienation from the earth, then it is to the earth we must return, to paraphrase the warning in Genesis 3:19. But not in theory, or rhetorically, or as a romantic ideal. Rather, discipleship must be restored to the center of ecological theology (an evangelical opportunity for Anabaptists), and Transition practices must inhabit the center of this discipleship. Such re-centering begs the question: *Where?*

II. The Journey of Re-place-ment

A quarter-century ago Gary Snyder, celebrated poet of the modern ecology movement, contended that it is “not enough just to ‘love nature’ or to want to ‘be in harmony with Gaia.’ Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience.”¹³ In a seminal essay, “Coming into the Watershed,” he wrote:

The usual focus of attention for most Americans is the human society itself with its problems and its successes, its icons and

¹² Lynn White's famous essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207, was largely correct in its indictment of Christendom's culpability in the ecological crisis, but largely wrong in tracing these roots to the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition. See Ched Myers, “‘To Serve and Preserve’: The Genesis Commission to Earth Stewardship,” *Sojourners*, March 2004, 28ff, and Willis Jenkins, “After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37, no. 2 (2009): 283-309.

¹³ Gary Snyder, “The Place, the Region and the Commons,” in *The Practice of the Wild* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 1990/2010), 42.

symbols. . . . the land we all live on is simply taken for granted—and proper relation to it is not taken as part of "citizenship." But . . . people are beginning to wake up and notice that the United States is located on a landscape with a severe, spectacular, spacey, wildly demanding, and ecstatic narrative to be learned. Its natural communities are each unique, and each of us, whether we like it or not—in the city or countryside—live in one of them. . . . When enough people get that picture, our political life will begin to change, and it will be the beginning of the next phase of American life.¹⁴

Snyder's work echoes that of Kentucky farmer Wendell Berry, the foremost critic of placelessness in North America. Berry laments that the functionaries of globalized capitalism "have no local allegiances; they must not have a local point of view . . . in order to be able to desecrate, endanger, or destroy a *place*."¹⁵ In a 1989 essay, "The Futility of Global Thinking," Berry articulates an essential point that underlies my argument in this paper. "No place on the earth can be completely healthy until all places are," he stipulated. However, "the question that must be addressed is not how to care for the planet, but how to care for each of the planet's millions of human and natural neighborhoods, each of its millions of small pieces and parcels of land, each one of which is in some precious way different from all the others."¹⁶

When I encountered these texts in the early 1990s, they "spoke to my condition," as Quakers say. The first Gulf War had enraged me as a citizen of empire; Los Angeles had just burned for the second time in my life because of endemic social disparity; and my father had died suddenly, my last link to

¹⁴ Gary Snyder, *Wild Earth* (Canton, NY: Cenozoic Society, 1992), 65ff; an edited version appears in Snyder, *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds: New and Selected Prose* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 1995), 219-35.

¹⁵ "Higher Education and Home Defense," in *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 51.

¹⁶ Wendell Berry, "Word and Flesh," in *What Are People For?* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 1990/2010), 200. Berry resonates with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assertion that "we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny" ("Letter from Birmingham City Jail," in *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Washington [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1986], 290).

five generations of family roots in California. Moreover, I was experiencing symptoms of what eco-psychologists call “solastalgia”: being homesick in a homeplace that is being destroyed.¹⁷ All my life I had seen the fragile chaparral and oak savannah landscapes of southern California relentlessly bulldozed and paved over by manic, unregulated “development.” Suburban tracts and trophy homes, resorts and boutique wineries, golf courses and shopping malls, military complexes and industrial agriculture—all animated by transplanted opportunists pursuing fantasies or corporate exploiters seeking quick profit.

A fierce desire arose in me to defend what little was left of the native landscapes that had profoundly imprinted upon my soul. My organizing work with indigenous people throughout the Pacific Basin in the 1980s had taught me that traditional people struggle for beloved land, not just against their oppressors. In order not to be only another alienated First World activist, I determined to reconnect with the place I was living *on* but not *into* (in Snyder’s sense). This journey of “re-place-ment” has been both outward (political, social, ecological) and inward (psychic, spiritual, theological).¹⁸

The crisis of the anthropocene presents myriad technological, economic, and political challenges that theology must take seriously.¹⁹ The personal and political disciplines of re-place-ment are key for both Christian identity re-formation and the church’s gospel witness to be truly contextual today. We have lost our way as creatures of God’s biosphere—and only the map woven into Creation can lead us home.

¹⁷ See a concise definition at http://seedmagazine.com/content/article/what_is_solastalgia/. Also Glenn Albrecht, “Solastalgia, A New Concept in Human Health and Identity,” *Philosophy Activism Nature* 3 (2005): 41–44.

¹⁸ I exposit these dimensions in *Who Will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994). The last decade has seen a growing interest in theology of place: see e.g., John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place: Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003); Craig Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); and Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Overviewed in Michael Northcutt, *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

III. Bioregionalism and Watershed Mapping

For more than forty years, an old/new paradigm broadly termed "bioregionalism" has re-emerged in North America and beyond. It has spiritual and intellectual roots first in the example of traditional indigenous cultures, and second in Henry David Thoreau's mid-19th century experiments at Walden and Lewis Mumford's early 20th-century critique of "super-congestion" in industrial society and proposal of "ecoregionalism" as an alternative.²⁰ One of the movement's pioneers and chroniclers summarizes the trend: "Bioregionalism is a body of thought and related practice that has evolved in response to the challenge of reconnecting socially-just human cultures in a sustainable manner to the region-scale ecosystems in which they are irrevocably embedded. Over nearly twenty-five years this ambitious project of 're-inhabitation' has carefully evolved far outside of the usual political or intellectual epicenters."²¹ Kirkpatrick Sale's 1985 primer provides a helpful definition of "bioregionalism":

Bio is from the Greek word for forms of life . . . and *region* is from the Latin *regere*, territory to be ruled. . . . They convey together a life-territory, a place defined by its life forms, its topography and its biota, rather than by human dictates; a region governed by nature, not legislature. And if the concept initially strikes us as strange, that may perhaps only be a measure of how distant we have become from the wisdom it conveys.²²

²⁰ Lewis Mumford, "A Rehearsal to Bioregionalism," in Michael Vincent McGinnis, ed., *Bioregionalism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

²¹ Doug Aberly, "Interpreting Bioregionalism: A story from many voices," in *ibid.*, 14f. See Aberly, *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1993), and *Futures by Design: The Practice of Ecological Planning* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1994). For an early influential manifesto, see Jim Dodge, "Living by Life: Some Bioregional Thought and Practice," *Co-evolution Quarterly* 32 (1981): 6-12. Other notable early works: Jim Cheney, "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative," *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 2 (1989): 117-34; Van Andrus et al., *Home! A Bioregional Reader* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990); and Robert Thayer, ed., *Lifeplace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003), and others mentioned below. For current organizing see the websites of groups in Canada (www.ibspei.ca/index.htm), the US (<http://wp.bioregionalcongress.net/>), and the UK (www.bioregional.com/). Thayer provides a comprehensive bibliography of bioregionalist writing prior to 1999 at <http://bioregion.ucdavis.edu/who/biblio.html>.

²² Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (San Francisco: Sierra Club

More recently, many bioregionalists have emphasized an even more specific locus for re-inhabitory literacy and engagement, focusing on what is most basic to life: water.²³ John Wesley Powell, the first non-native person to raft successfully down the Colorado River in the 1860s, gave the first modern definition of a watershed: “It is that area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of the community.”²⁴ Wherever we reside—city, suburb, rural area—our lives are deeply intertwined within such a “bounded hydrologic system.” Precipitation hits the ridges and flows into our watershed or a neighboring one, drained by a watercourse and its tributaries (even if buried under concrete). The area covered in the water’s journey from its origination in the hydrological cycle to its end point in a pond, lake, or ocean is the watershed. Every watershed comprises a unique mix of habitats that influence each other, including forests, wetlands, fields and meadows, rivers and lakes, farms, and towns. All life is watershed-placed without exception, and ignorance of this fact is consequential.

The 2,110 watersheds in the continental US come in all sizes. The Mississippi Basin is the third largest watershed in the world, draining 41 percent of the lower 48 states into the Gulf of Mexico. The Ventura River watershed, where I live, is a scant 227 square miles. Brock Dolman, a permaculturist and founder of the Occidental Art and Ecology Center in Northern California, argues that watersheds “underlie all human endeavors and form the foundation for all future aspirations and survival.” He invokes the metaphor of a cradle, which he calls a “Basin of Relations,” in which every living organism is interconnected and dependent on the health of the whole. This form of “social, local, intentional community with other life forms and inanimate processes, like the fire cycle and the hydrological cycle” represents “the geographic scale of applied sustainability, which must be regenerative,

Books, 1985), 43.

²³ For some theological foundations, see Ched Myers, “Everything Will Live Where the River Goes: A Bible Study on Water, God, and Redemption,” *Sojourners*, April 2012. <http://sojo.net/magazine/2012/04>. See also Christiana Peppar, *Just Water: Theology, Ethics and the Global Water Crisis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014).

²⁴ John Wesley Powell, *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*, 1875; online at <https://archive.org/details/explorationofcol1961powe>.

because we desperately are in need of making up for lost time."²⁵

Watershed mapping helps promote this alternative way of viewing reality. It is a practical tool for advancing literacy in the actual landscapes that sustain us, requiring us to learn about geological features, soil types, climate zones, and flora and fauna as well as about built environments.²⁶ At the same time it helps us re-imagine the world. In western culture, social (and ecological) worldviews have been profoundly shaped by two-dimensional political maps. But these are social re-productions that enshrine problematic historical legacies of colonization and exploitation while rendering nature secondary or invisible altogether.

The graphic on the next page is a recent watershed map of the United States imagined by John Lavey.²⁷ How might political culture change if the basic unit of governance was "nature rather than legislature"?²⁸

The second graphic is a map of the boundaries of Ventura and Los Angeles Counties, overlaid onto those of the various watersheds of our region (the Ventura River Watershed where I live is highlighted).²⁹ The disconnect

²⁵ "Know Your Lifeboat: An Interview With Permaculturist Brock Dolman," November 10, 2011, at <http://ecohearth.com/eco-zine/eco-heroes/1088-know-your-lifeboat-an-interview-with-permaculturist-brock-dolman.html>. See also Dolman, *Basins of Relations: A Citizen's Guide to Protecting and Restoring Our Watershed* (Occidental, CA: Water Institute, 2008); also www.oaecwater.org.

²⁶ On this see http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/activity/mapping-watersheds/?ar_a=1; and www.nativemaps.org.

²⁷ Map by John Lavey can be viewed at <http://communitybuilders.net/the-united-watershed-states-of-america/> and at www.flickr.com/photos/108072018@N03/10929250216. Printed here by permission of John Lavey (jlavey@sonoraninstitute.org).

²⁸ In 1879 John Wesley Powell proposed that as new states were brought into the union they be formed around watersheds rather than arbitrary political boundaries. He believed, presciently, that because of an arid climate, state organization decided by any other factor would lead to water conflict. Powerful forces, however, most prominently the rail companies, were pressing that borders be aligned to facilitate commercial agriculture. The West, Powell argued, was too dry and its soils too poor to support agriculture at a scale common in the East; so he produced a map depicting what "watershed states" might look like. The rail lobby prevailed in Congress, with profound and continuing consequences. For that map and background see Charles Hutchinson, "John Wesley Powell and the New West," www.cosmosclub.org/web/journals/2000/hutchinson.html. For a recent exploration of Powell's legacy, see Jack and Celestia Loeffler, eds., *Thinking Like a Watershed: Voices from the West* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2012).

²⁹ This map is found at www.waterboards.ca.gov/losangeles/water_issues/programs/regional_

Watershed and Boundaries: Los Angeles and Ventura Counties



Source: State of California. See note 29.

is apparent: political boundaries are often straight (no continental US state is without one), while watershed boundaries never are. Such straight lines are the first order of abstraction, alienating us from the topographical and hydrological realities sustaining us. Happily, after years of lobbying, local activists recently persuaded the Ventura Countywide Stormwater Program to install road signs around our valley reading “Entering the Ventura River Watershed.” Getting a public agency to name the watershed concept in public space is a small but significant sign of the times. If maps are a battleground for shaping consciousness, so too is signage directing us around the landscape!

IV. Watershed Consciousness as Socio-Political Paradigm

A watershed focus does not imply escaping from the wider issues of society or politics, as has too often been true of middle-class conservationist agendas.

program/Water_Quality_and_Watersheds/ventura_river_watershed/summary.shtml.
Printed here by permission of the Water Resources Control Board of the State of California.

“Watershed consciousness and bioregionalism is not just environmentalism . . . but a move toward resolving both nature and society with the practice of a profound citizenship in both the natural and the social worlds.”³⁰

Coming to bioregionalism steeped in peace and justice activism and education, I am deeply committed to an integral approach. After all, virtually every watershed on the planet now bears the marks of modern human habitation and degradation. Social disparity, exclusion, and violence—both historic and contemporary—can and should be mapped and engaged at the watershed level. However, the watershed paradigm subverts dominant maps of reality, animating our political and social imaginations regarding what is possible—and imperative. A few notes must suffice here to sketch out this terrain.

Economics By any measure of social justice or ecological sustainability, globalized capitalism is not working. A watershed focus compels us to account for what Wendell Berry calls the “Great Economy” of nature.³¹ Molly Scott Cato’s study signals that the discipline of bioregional economics has arrived, and economists are beginning to study particular watersheds.³² This new way of thinking is best popularized by the local food movement, which asks what can be harvested, produced, and consumed sustainably in a given bioregion. This logic should be extended to every aspect of economic life, from planning to resource extraction to waste management. We must move toward regenerative perspectives in planning and develop indigenous (or naturalized) economic assets sustainably, while weaning ourselves off the exotic and the outsourced, including labor and capital.³³

³⁰ Snyder, *A Place in Space*, 235.

³¹ Wendell Berry, *Home Economics* (San Francisco: Northpoint Press, 1987).

³² Scott Cato, *The Bioregional Economy: Land, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* (London: Routledge, 2013). See economic metrics applied to watersheds in Rhode Island (www.watershedcounts.org/economic.html) and Washington: www.eartheconomics.org/FileLibrary/file/Reports/Puget%20Sound%20and%20Watersheds/Puyallup/Puyallup_Watershed_Report_Online_Version.pdf. Ecological economist Paul Hawken suggests that an economy functions *like* a watershed: <http://urbanhabitat.org/node/511>. An early expression of bioregional economics (1999) is Bernard Lietaer and Art Warmoth, “Designing Bioregional Economies in Response to Globalization”: <http://ausar.com/Articles-EEconomy/Designing%20Bioregional%20Economies.pdf>. See also http://www.reliableprosperity.net/bioregional_economies.html.

³³ See, e.g., www.zerowaste.org/; www.financialpermaculture.org/. Mark Boyle promotes “the

Politics Montana politician Daniel Kemmis, an important progenitor of contemporary bioregionalism, argues that "re-inhabitory politics" arises from "the efforts of unlike people to live well in specific places."³⁴ Our political culture would be healthier if it mirrored the "hetarchy" of nature, privileging local self-determination and bioregional confederation over the centralized state, an urge toward self-determination that has characterized most of human history.³⁵ Kirkpatrick Sale argues that tendencies toward atomization would be constrained by the fact that watershed citizens "share the same configurations of life . . . social and economic constraints . . . environmental problems and opportunities, and so there is every reason to expect contact and cooperation among them."

Provincialism is constrained by the fact that the ecological and social health of each watershed is connected with every other. Snyder calls for "watershed councils" to be the locus of bioregional governance. That many such bodies have been formed across North America—some advisory, some adjudicatory—suggests that new practices of citizenship are being built in the shell of unsustainable political systems.³⁶ From a Transition perspective, personal changes are more meaningful, and collective change more measurable, at a watershed scale.

convergence of permaculture principles with gift economics": www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/wild-economics-interview-mark-boyle).

³⁴ Daniel Kemmis, *Community and the Politics of Place* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 82. See also his *This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001).

³⁵ Sale, *Dwellers in the Land*, 94ff. See also Mike Carr, *Bioregionalism and Civil Society: Democratic Challenges to Corporate Globalism* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 2004); Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992; and Mark Whitaker, *Toward a Bioregional State: A Series of Letters About Political Theory and Formal Institutional Design in the Era of Sustainability* (E-book, iUniverse, Inc., 2005).

³⁶ Snyder, *A Place in Space*, 229. The Ventura River Watershed Council exemplifies how grassroots, governmental, and business interests can cooperate in regional mapping, planning, management, and restoration (<http://venturawatershed.org/>). A pioneering non-profit organization in Arizona is Watershed Management Group (<http://watershedmg.org/>). See also Charles Foster, *Experiments in Bioregionalism: The New England River Basins Story* (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1984); John Woolley et al., "The California Watershed Movement: Science and the Politics of Place," *Natural Resources Journal* 42 (2002): 133ff.

Social and Environmental Justice Central to a watershed ethos should be a commitment to restorative justice for all those displaced in the past and marginalized in the present. The land itself is an historic subject whose story must be learned.³⁷ The current health of the place must be assessed from the perspective of both land and people who have experienced degradation: poisoned agricultural fields and farmworkers; paved over strip malls and low-wage workers; threatened riparian habitat and homeless people.³⁸ In particular, we must learn the legacy of indigenous peoples—whether disappeared, displaced, or “inconveniently” present.³⁹ Though many traditional lifeways were casualties of conquest and colonization, our collective survival depends upon rediscovering how native people lived sustainably long before immigrants arrived. Indeed, the full restoration of *any* watershed in North America must include the demanding process of “truth and reconciliation” (about which Canada’s experiment concerning the Indian residential schools legacy has much to teach us).⁴⁰ The same restorative justice commitments should also extend to non-human inhabitants of the watershed.⁴¹

Katherine McCabe summarizes these concerns under the rubric of “Just Sustainability,” which she describes as “an approach that recognizes the inseparable nature of social and environmental justice and sustainability,

³⁷ A magnificent example of this approach is Will Campbell’s *Providence* (Waco, TX: Baylor Univ. Press, 2002), narrating Southern history from the perspective of a one square-mile plot of land in Mississippi. See also William Lang, “Bioregionalism and the History of Place,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 414-19.

³⁸ David Pepper offers a Marxist analysis of “green politics” in *Eco-Socialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³⁹ See Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ See www.trc.ca. It is also important to build relations with other people of the land near and far, such as Palestinian olive farmers, Basque sheep herders, or immigrant Mexican *vaqueros*. They too are living repositories of the wisdom and practical competencies arising from a placed way of life, and their survival testifies to a remarkable ability to resist assimilation and retain traditional skills.

⁴¹ The field of ecological restorative justice is developing. See, e.g., Tama Weisman, “Restorative Environmental Justice as a Way of Life: Learning from Ubuntu,” *Dialogue and Universalism* 3, no. 1 (2012): 92-109; Brian Preston, “The Use of Restorative Justice for Environmental Crime,” 35 *Criminal Law Journal* 136 (2011); and www.restorativejustice.org/press-room/07kindscrimes/ecological-crimes.

and pushes for organizations and governmental institutions to become more aware of the relationships that exist between inequality, injustice and environmentally unsustainable practices.”⁴² Such integration is intrinsic to a watershed paradigm.

V. Watershed Discipleship

Bioregional thought and practice have been mostly ignored by Christian theology and ethics until recently.⁴³ Nevertheless, a watershed paradigm not only holds a key to our survival as a species but can also inspire the next great renewal of a church determined to live in light of, not in spite of, the looming ecological endgame. It roots Creation Care in place, offering a radical yet practical approach to Transition faith.

What would it mean for Christians broadly and Anabaptists in particular to re-center our citizen-identity in the topography of Creation, rather than in the political geography of dominant cultural ideation, and to ground our discipleship practices in the watershed where we reside? An alliance of faith-rooted organizers and educators around North America is currently exploring “watershed discipleship” as a framing idea, which seems to be resonating, particularly in Mennonite circles.⁴⁴ The phrase is an intentional triple entendre:

⁴² Katherine McCabe, “The Environment on Our Doorsteps: Community Restorative Justice and the Roots of Sustainability” (Master of Science thesis, Univ. of Michigan, 2009), <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/64292>.

⁴³ Exceptions in the New Cosmology movement include Thomas Berry, e.g., “The Hudson River Valley: A Bioregional Story,” in *At Home on the Earth: Becoming Native to Our Place* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1999), 103-10. See also Anne Marie Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas Berry and Bernard Lonergan* (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1999), 98ff, and Diarmu O’Murchu, *Ancestral Grace: Meeting God in Our Human Story* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008). Non-professional theologians Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, and the late Jim Corbett in *Goatwalking: A Guide to Wildland Living, A Quest for the Peaceable Kingdom* (New York: Viking, 1991) and *A Sanctuary for All Life* (Engelwood, CO: Howling Dog Press, 2005) operate within the spirit of bioregionalism, though not using its discourse. Twenty years ago my conclusions in *Who Will Roll Away the Stone?*, proposing a reconstructive theology of re-place-ment and politics of bioregionalism did not find much of an audience among churches, but these ideas seem to be resonating now.

⁴⁴ We convened gatherings in California and Maryland in 2013 to inaugurate the Alliance; see <http://watersheddiscipleship.org>.

1. It recognizes that we are in a watershed historical moment of crisis, which demands that environmental and social justice and sustainability be integral to everything we do as Christians and as citizen inhabitants of specific places.
2. It acknowledges the inescapably bioregional locus of an incarnational following of Jesus: our discipleship and the life of the local church inescapably take place in a watershed context.
3. It also implies that we need to be disciples *of* our watersheds. In the New Testament, discipleship is a journey of learning from, following, and coming to trust the “rabbi”—which in this case is the “Book of Creation.”⁴⁵

The challenge here, to paraphrase an argument made in 1968 by Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum, is that we won’t save places we don’t love; we can’t love places we don’t know; and we don’t know places we haven’t learned. From the beginning of human history, nothing was more crucial to the survival and flourishing of traditional societies than a symbiotic, relational ethos of watershed literacy and loyalty. It remains necessary today, but we have a long way to go to reconstruct the intimacy required to know, love, and save our places.

Obviously, understanding Christian discipleship in terms of a commitment to heal the world by restoring the social and ecological health of our respective watersheds is still marginal in churches. Yet ecclesial communities of place can make an enormous contribution to the wider struggle to reverse the ecological catastrophe—and in the process recover the soul of their faith tradition. Christians are deeply culpable in the present crisis but also have ancient resources for the deep shifts needed.

The nascent Watershed Discipleship Alliance seeks to amplify the perspectives outlined in this paper through education, advocacy, and training. We focus on three key aspects of a “Watershed Ecclesiology”:

⁴⁵ See Todd Wynward’s post at <http://watersheddiscipleship.org/blog/region-rabbi>, Nov. 12, 2013. St. Bonaventure was one of many church Fathers who spoke of Creation as “scripture”: “Throughout the entire creation, the wisdom of God shines forth.... Truly, whoever reads this book will find life and will draw salvation from the Lord” (cited at www.bookofnature.org/library/ngb.html).

Theology and Scripture, Liturgy and Spirituality, and Church Practices.

Theology and Scripture

Watershed discipleship draws deeply on the biblical tradition to address all three key dysfunctional elements of industrial civilization and religion mentioned above.

Only a grounded incarnational faith can battle the placeless theological docetism of modernity with its abstract rationalism and idealist ethics. A watershed hermeneutic remembers that the core narrative of the Hebrew Bible concerns a people covenanting with God and with specific land as caretakers of the divine gift. It recovers a terrestrial Jesus who, in the tradition of the wilderness prophets, is intimate with his bioregion (baptized in a river, praying on mountains, traversing the sea, pointing to wildflowers as object lessons), consistently illustrating the “Reign of God” by referencing plants and animals, human bodies, and food.⁴⁶ It shares the vision of an eschatological metropolis transfigured into a garden, the world re-hydrated by the healing “River of Life.”⁴⁷ From Noah to the New Jerusalem, the biblical tradition understands that the earth and her inhabitants will be redeemed in their materiality.

Only relationship with proximate biotic communities can wean us off our presumptive superiority. Watershed discipleship asserts the priority of Creation over all ideological or hegemonic claims, and re-centers anthropology in placed creatureliness, defined by symbiosis and servanthood, not by objectification and domination. It recognizes that Creation is “groaning in travail,” waiting for us to embrace the work of liberation and healing (Rom. 8:19-23).⁴⁸ This means that our primary vocation is not to re-engineer Creation to human benefit, an impulse biblically identified with the Fall, but to rediscover communion with, and our proper place in, the

⁴⁶ For example, in Matthew’s gospel alone Jesus invokes seeds (13:24, 31), fields (13:44, 20:1), fish (13:47), healed bodies (9:35), children (18:3), yeast (13:33), pearls (13:45), and wine (26:29) as expressions of God’s Reign. For an exploration of this matter, see Ched Myers, “Pay Attention to the Birds: A Bible Study on Luke 12,” *Sojourners* 38, no. 11, December 2009, 29ff.

⁴⁷ See Myers, “Everything Will Live Where the River Goes,” n23 above.

⁴⁸ The verbs in verses 22 (*sustenazō*, only here in the NT) and 23 (*stenazō*) may allude to the “groan” of the Israelites under slavery (LXX *stenagmos*, Ex 2:24, 6:5, as in Rom 8:26).

community of earth.⁴⁹ We must relearn the lesson of the “unhewn stone” (Ex. 20:25), which stipulates the intrinsic value of the earth while problematizing the work of our hands, especially when technologically mediated, as always potentially idolatrous (see, e.g., Isa. 44:9-20).

Only the long-term project of living sustainability *somewhere* can wean us off the addictive-compulsive consumption and quest for autonomous infinitude. Watershed discipleship embraces the “Sabbath Economics” tradition of scripture, with its cosmology of gift, reciprocity, equity, and self-limitation.⁵⁰ This tradition challenges both exploitive materialism that commodifies and pillages the earth and alienated spiritualism that refuses responsibility for such behaviors. And it resists the way industrial civilization keeps us mobile (following economic booms and busts until we are placeless), enjoining instead practices of re-inhabitation and solidarity with degraded places and people.

Ecological readings of scripture have increased over the past two decades, from the Earth Bible Project to the Seasons of Creation Lectionary.⁵¹ Yet much more is to be done.⁵² The Bible is an ally, not an adversary, of watershed discipleship; indeed, the prophetic traditions of both testaments may alone be capable of rousing us from an ecocidal slumber to a regenerative imagination.

⁴⁹ See Ched Myers, “From Garden to Tower (Genesis 1-11): Re-Visioning Our Origins,” in ed. Steve Heinrichs, *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice and Life Together* (Waterloo, ON; Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2013), 109-21.

⁵⁰ See Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics* (Washington, DC: Tell the Word, 2001).

⁵¹ See www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/theology/ctsc/projects/earthbible/ and publications listed there by Norman Habel and others; and <http://seasonofcreation.com/> and www.bibleandecology.org/.

⁵² For example, see my exploration of the prophetic protest of deforestation, “‘The Cedar has Fallen!’ The Prophetic Word vs. Imperial Clear-cutting,” *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet*, ed. David Rhoads (London: Continuum, 2007), 211-23, and of Jesus’ so-called cursing of the fig tree, “Jesus Talks to Plants: Agrarian Wisdom and Earth Symbolism,” *A Faith Encompassing All Creation: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for the Environment*, eds. Tripp York and Andy Alexis-Baker (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014). For a tentative look at principles and practices for reading the Bible with a “permacultural sensibility” (or “permeneutics”), see www.chedmyers.org/blog/2014/05/09/permeneutics.

VI. The Parish Re-placed

Liturgy and Spirituality

The church’s symbolic life stands to be renewed richly by watershed engagement and literacy. “The task of re-placed theology is to reclaim symbols of redemption which are indigenous to the bioregion in which the church dwells, to remember the stories of the peoples of the place, and to sing anew the old songs of the land. These traditions can be woven together with the symbols, stories and songs of biblical radicalism. This will necessarily be a local, contextual and often deeply personal project.”⁵³

One of the exercises my organization does with groups has them recontextualize Mark’s prologue (Mark 1:1-20) in their own bioregions. Which places in their watershed might be analogous to Mark’s wilderness or the Jordan River? What might be the dynamics of power and social crisis analogous to Mark’s geopolitical and historic specificity, in which people suffering foreign domination were drawn from urban centers out to the margins to encounter a wilderness prophet? Who in their local history might be analogous to John (a notorious prophet arrested by the authorities) or to the marginalized peasant fishermen Jesus called to join his movement? This exercise requires literacy not only in the gospel narrative, its dynamics and literary antecedents, but also in our own bioregions, including topography, spiritual and storied traditions, political history, and social matrices. Participants report that both ancient text and present context come alive through such analogical imagination.

Sacraments are also crucial points of connection. What local waters might be used for baptism? Better to move such rituals outside to a creek, lake, or beach; but we can also bring *those* waters into the sanctuary. The Abundant Table Farm Project, a local partner, is developing a campaign challenging Episcopalians to “localize the liturgy”: to know where the bread and wine, candles, and tapestries come from, who made them and under what conditions.⁵⁴ Apprehending the bioregional materiality of the sacraments stimulates conversation about local economy and ecology, and this careful attention in turn deepens an appreciation for the symbols.

Individual or church retreats can become times to learn watershed

⁵³ Myers, *Who Will Roll Away the Stone?*, 369.

⁵⁴ See <http://theabundanttable.org/>.

literacy; to encourage personal healing around displacement and solastalgia; to pray outdoors, learning to be still and observe; to explore the many Christian traditions of nature mysticism; or to engage in recovery work around behaviors feeding the ecological crisis, such as compulsive consumption or work addiction.

Church Practices

Developing a “Watershed Ecclesiology” involves consciously rethinking our collective habits, large and small. The tradition of having fresh flowers in the sanctuary, for example, becomes an opportunity to learn and deploy native plants, using them as conversation pieces about the bioregion. Congregational artists can imagine ways to bring watershed iconography into the worship space, and avid hikers can mobilize to get church members out into the watershed. Potluck meals become times to discuss household Sabbath Economics covenanting around difficult issues like money and ecological footprints, made more possible because food is friendly.⁵⁵ The midweek Bible study or Sunday adult education hour might explore the rich, growing literature on ecotheology.⁵⁶

Mission trips can investigate and respond to local social disparities, especially regarding “environmental racism” and the unequal impacts of climate change on the poor.⁵⁷ The young adult group can pack into the

⁵⁵ See Matthew Colwell, *Sabbath Economics: Household Practices* (Washington, DC: Tell the Word, 2008). While recognizing the need for systemic change and policy advocacy, Sabbath Economics and Watershed Discipleship work at the concrete intersections between “big” issues (e.g., economic justice, climate change) and people’s daily lives, thus combatting paralysis or exoneration. Empowered, engaged citizens are more likely to take collective political action.

⁵⁶ We have benefited from the work of biblical scholars Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009) and Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist’s Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), as well as from recent popular theologies such as Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), Fred Bahnson, *Soil and Sacrament: A Spiritual Memoir of Food and Faith* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), and Ragan Sutterfield, *Cultivating Reality: How the Soil Might Save Us* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

⁵⁷ For exemplary research and analysis on these issues in California, see the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (<http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ej/>).

backcountry to pick up micro-trash; visit a similarly engaged church in another watershed to compare notes and cross-train; seek to encounter the realities of environmental refugees (who are now everywhere); or venture a road trip to protest Keystone XL or a local fracking site. If churches offered to help the rising generation prepare for a difficult future marked by resource wars and increasing calls for natural and social disaster relief, perhaps youth would inhabit our congregations more.

Foremost is the task of re-inhabiting the church's own location. The older notion of parish-as-*placed*-community is still alive, even if atrophied by market-driven church shopping and commuter mobility. Older congregations often retain a robust sense of local or regional identity, while some are named after an ecological feature of the watershed. A notable example of a “bioregional remodel” is Southside Presbyterian Church in South Tucson, ground zero during the Sanctuary movement of the 1980s and still active in immigrant rights organizing. Members reconfigured their sanctuary in the round, slightly recessed below floor level to resemble a *kiva* (ceremonial space of the nearby Pueblo Indians), and incorporated the Catholic tradition of saints with various *nichos* around the perimeter. Native landscaping now surrounds the building, including a living ocotillo cactus fence.⁵⁸ In architecture and design, the medium is the message—and for churches, part of the witness.

Most existing congregational brick and mortar must be audited and retrofitted for greater environmental resiliency, from water catchment to energy use. But this is only the first step. Churches represent some of the last local community spaces left in capitalist society. So, why can't the church kitchen become a venue through the week for re-skilling around cooking with local foods as well as fermenting, canning, and preserving—in which under-deployed congregational elders teach young adults the older arts of home economics? The fellowship hall can host meetings to improve the ecological and social health of the watershed, while significant parts of the lawn or parking lot can (and should) be repurposed for community vegetable gardening, growing native herbs for medicinal use, natural building, and permaculture classes. Reimagining how we use church buildings and

⁵⁸ See www.southsidepresbyterian.org; for their work with immigrants, see www.tucsonsamaritans.org.

grounds could signal a new era of “demonstration project evangelism” across the landscape. Such projects can inspire church members, the neighborhood, and even local authorities to replicate best practices.

It may require as many generations to reclaim our land and sense of place in North America as it did to destroy them. But we have no alternative, and the process of “energy descent and identity reclamation” must proceed with urgency. In many ways churches are ideally situated to become local centers for learning to love our places enough to defend and restore them. Yet we must first “re-inhabit” these places *as church*, allowing the natural landscapes to shape our symbolic life, social engagements, and material habits. The ecclesial practices suggested above do not require parishioners to embrace a dire analysis of the ecological crisis; they are good liturgical, stewardship, mission, and evangelism practices that make pragmatic sense on their own. Yet pursuing them can and should open up a deeper conversation and consciousness—because we *are* at a critical crossroad. Christians must move rapidly from environmental denial to watershed discipleship.

VII. Anabaptist Resonances

I conclude with five ways in which watershed discipleship is congruent with, even indigenous to, an Anabaptist vision of faith and practice.

First, a watershed vision of church centers on convictions that must translate into practices. Abstract doctrines and theological idealism are responsible for the church’s complicity with our historic crisis. Anabaptism faith is about discipleship, not just belief, and our evangelical task is to help this become normative for all Christians in an age of ecocide.

Second, our tradition takes baptism for discipleship as central. The 16th-century radical reformers publicly expressed their conviction in the liturgical (and political) act of re-baptism. This water ritual was about re-identification with the Way of Jesus, which they correctly understood to mean, among other things, a refusal to fight or to rule. This rejection of civil religion earned them the ire of the Christian state, and they were often drowned in rivers in order to ridicule and terrorize their re-baptizing movement. Anabaptists thus understood all too well that “all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Rom. 6:3). But baptism is also about life, drawing on the deepest roots of the gospel story, in

which Jesus' Way was inaugurated by John the Baptist in the wild, cleansing, renewing waters of the Jordan River. Jesus' immersion into his sacred watershed, into the heart of a place and people crying out for liberation, signaled his recommitment to the Creator, the Creation, and the Covenant.

Tellingly, Gary Snyder resorts to the venerable language of baptism to describe the conversion required to re-inhabit our bioregions today: "For the non-Native American to become at home on this continent, he or she must be born again in this hemisphere."⁵⁹ Might this suggest that the Anabaptist tradition of re-baptism could be seen as a liturgical "sign" of replacing ourselves not only into the Way of Jesus but, like Jesus, also into our watersheds?⁶⁰ The ancient baptismal litany calls on us to "renounce Satan and all his works, and sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God"; might this be understood afresh in terms of our struggle with the personal and political pathologies and addictions that have brought us to the historic ecological crisis?

Third, watershed discipleship seeks to re-root our identity and work as a Peace Church in specific "basins of relations." Mennonites must figure out the new shape of conscientious objection, nonviolent resistance, and restorative justice in the context of industrial culture's all-out war on the

⁵⁹ Snyder, "The Place, the Region and the Commons," 43. This "full immersion" metaphor resonates provocatively with the gospel baptism account.

⁶⁰ In Mark's baptism narrative (Mark 1:9-12) we find similar prepositional awkwardness to Snyder's call to "come *into* the watershed." All those coming out to the wilderness prophet John are baptized *in* the Jordan (Greek *en*). Jesus, however, is baptized *into* the river (Greek *eis ton Iordanēn*), a difference with great theological and social significance: see Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988/2008), 129. Moreover, a wild bird then descends *onto* (or *into*?) Jesus (*eis auton*), and after this epiphany Jesus is driven by the Spirit deeper *into* the wilderness (*eis tēn eremon*) on a kind of "vision quest" to discover the roots of the historic crisis of his people: see Ched Myers, "The Wilderness Temptations and the American Journey," in *Richard Rohr: Illuminations of His Life and Work*, ed. A. Ebert and P. Brockman (New York: Crossroads, 1993), 143-57). While theologians usually understand Jesus' baptism as empowerment "from above," we could argue he was being en-spirited from "below" through a deep immersion *into* his beloved homeland, grounding him in the storied land of his ancestors, through which the Creator still speaks. Being "born again" *into* the sacred, wild spaces of a land groaning under Roman imperialism thus prepared him for his campaign to liberate and heal his people and place (hence the allusion in Mark 1:10 to Isaiah 64:1f).

biosphere from mountain-top removal to deep-sea drilling.⁶¹ Anabaptist peacemaking has much to learn from biotic communities about diversity, interdependence, and long-suffering resilience; indeed, solidarity with Creation-as-victim will teach much about a discipleship of the Cross.

Fourth, no Christian tradition of European origin has more to offer the reconstruction of agrarian theology and practices today. Historically, Anabaptists often found refuge from persecution by retreating to marginal habitats on society's fringes. When allowed to settle, they tended to steward land well and model sustainable home economics on limited resources. Watershed disciples would do well to draw deeply on the long tradition of "more with less" experiments in simplicity, mutual aid, and sustainable farming for which many Amish and Mennonites are still known.

Finally, and key to all the above, watershed discipleship embraces the Anabaptist conviction that because God cannot be identified with the State, citizenship consequently can be understood as loyalty to God's good Creation, which trumps *all* human ideological and hegemonic claims. Does this not represent the final deconstruction of Constantinianism? The essentially dis-established, anarchic character of Anabaptist self-organization coheres well with contemporary visions of bioregional self-determination and confederation (and with traditional indigenous tribal polities). Our traditions of heterogeneous, non-hierarchical communal consultation and discernment will be helpful for building a culture of consensual decision making in watershed councils.

To be sure, advocating for and experimenting with such models seems unrealistic amidst the super-concentrations of political and economic power today. But remember that 16th-century Anabaptists were alone and isolated in their insistence on separating church from state, yet that "heresy" eventually became conventional wisdom. Like Anabaptists, watershed visionaries will have to find the spiritual resources, fierce patience, and communal stamina for the long-term prospect of living and working against mainstream culture, while stubbornly incubating radical alternatives that may germinate only in the very long term.

In sum, the Anabaptist movement historically survived mainly by

⁶¹ A good example of such experimentation is Christian Peacemaker Teams' Aboriginal Justice work in Canada (see www.cpt.org/work/aboriginal_justice).

sustaining small relational communities that practiced mutual aid in specific bioregional contexts and were more attentive to the land than to the dictates of the State and the surrounding economic culture. Those traditional patterns represent substantive parallels to the reconstructive work of watershed discipleship today. I hope that Mennonite (and environmentalist) colleagues will deem them worth exploring seriously.⁶²

In order to forge a different future that is sustainable, resilient, and just, we must be born again into watershed discipleship. We are, says Brock Dolman, “perched on the tipping point of a watershed moment. . . . Now is the time to bring our communities together to set in motion plans and processes that ensure our watersheds will remain healthy in perpetuity. Your home basin of relations is your lifeboat.”⁶³ Dolman’s lifeboat metaphor recalls the story of Noah’s ark. But it also conjures up that moment where Jesus has to *force* his disciples to get into their boat to cross to the “other side”—a journey they were reluctant to embrace, having nearly drowned on the first voyage (Mark 6:45). I pray that the Spirit which hovers still over Creation will summon Christians—especially those of Anabaptist orientation—to embark on the journey of solidarity with and in our watershed arks. May we as disciples in this difficult hour follow Father Noah and Brother Jesus into the coming storm!

Ched Myers is an activist theologian, biblical scholar, educator, author, organizer and advocate for peace and justice work and radical discipleship. He lives and works in southern California. For a list of his publications and other information, visit www.ChedMyers.org.

⁶² Our organization is pleased with a growing partnership with Mennonite Church USA’s Creation Care Network (<http://www.mennocreationcare.org/>) around Watershed Discipleship organizing. Albuquerque Mennonite Church proclaimed itself a “watershed community” in April, 2014 (<http://www.abqmennonite.org/>).

⁶³ Regarding “Know Your Lifeboat,” see note 25.

O Sweet Exchange: The Cross of Christ in the Drama of Reconciliation¹

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek

Christ for Us: Jesus' Death and Atonement Theories

Christ, the Apostle Paul proclaimed, died “for us.” The life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Nicene Creed affirms, was “for us and for our salvation.” How, though, is Jesus’ death “for us” and how is it “for our salvation”? Surprisingly, concerning a question that would seem central to the Christian gospel, Paul offered relatively little by way of an exact answer. And the Nicene Creed, the doctrinal standard of the church catholic, says no more than that Christ was “crucified” and “died.” The brevity of both scriptural witness and creedal tradition on the precise meaning of the vicarious function (“for us”) and saving purpose (“for our salvation”) of Jesus’ death has left the question open for debate. Only when we get to the Protestant confessions of the Reformation era do we find definitive statements on the specific meaning of Jesus’ death.²

Down the centuries, Christian tradition has gone beyond Scripture and creed to fill in the details by formulating various ways to explain the vicarious function and saving purpose of Jesus’ death—atonement theories, we call them. These theories include Irenaeus’s “recapitulation” theory (2nd C.); Gregory’s “ransom” theory (4th C.); Anselm’s “satisfaction” theory (11th C.); Abelard’s “moral influence” theory (12th C.); and Calvin’s “penal substitution” theory (16th C.).³ Such theories make sense of Jesus’ death within a framework of assumptions that explain the cross as the necessary and sufficient link between us and our salvation: God-in-Christ has done

¹ This essay draws together and carries forward some elements from my book, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). My thanks to two anonymous reviewers of this journal for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

² Concerning the creedal tradition and confessional statements on Jesus’ death, see *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 95-108.

³ For an excellent study of the various atonement theories, see Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

through the cross what we needed for our salvation but could not do for ourselves. All atonement theories agree on that general statement, even as they diverge on the details. Each theory offers something of value, even though we must carefully scrutinize it to see whether it utilizes assumptions that obscure more than clarify the cross.⁴

In this article I will focus on penal substitution, by far the most popular atonement theory among Protestant Christians today and the stuff of many a Sunday sermon.⁵ The logic of penal substitution might be presented in chiastic (“X”) form:

Sin violates God’s law and offends God’s person, such that human sinners become objects of God’s wrath.

God’s law decrees that death is the penalty for sin, such that death for sin is necessary to satisfy God’s justice and propitiate God’s wrath.

If God and humans are to be reconciled, therefore, the wrath of God must be propitiated and the law of retribution must be satisfied in such a way that saves humans from death—and thus the penalty of death for sin must be paid by a substitute for sinners.

God’s love sends Jesus to pay the penalty for sin (penal) by dying in place of sinners on the cross (substitution) in order to satisfy God’s retribution and thereby propitiate God’s wrath.

Now that the penalty of death for sin has been paid by the substitution of Christ for sinners, the law of retribution has been satisfied and the wrath of God has been propitiated—and thus God and humans can be reconciled.

The logic of this theory is driven by the assumed necessity that God

⁴ Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, helpfully distinguishes between what is helpful and what is problematic in each theory, while Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), show how various atonement theories effectively obscure “the scandal of the cross.”

⁵ Perhaps the best exposition of the penal substitution view is John R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986). For an extended defense of penal substitution, see Steve Jeffrey, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007).

must satisfy retributive justice, in order to propitiate God's wrath, as the prerequisite of reconciliation.⁶

As an abstract theory, penal substitution is surely logical, given its assumptions. Those assumptions, however, tend to obscure more than clarify. First, consider the purposes of God. God's motivation for sending his Son, the gospel says, is not God's need to propitiate his wrath but God's love for the world: on account of this love, God sent the Son not to judge the world but to save it through the Son (John 3:16-17). The penal substitution theory does affirm that God saves sinners on account of love, but it puts God's wrath between God's love and saving sinners, necessitating Jesus' death to propitiate God in order that they might be saved. By framing God's purpose this way, the primary emphasis of penal substitution remains on God's wrath. Likewise, consider the cross of Christ. Jesus' death demonstrates, Paul writes, not that God must exact retribution for sin but that God loves even sinners: on account of God's love for us while we were still sinners, Christ died in order to rescue us from sin and reconcile us to God (Rom. 5:6-11). The penal substitution theory does affirm that Jesus' death demonstrates God's love, but it frames the work of God's love to save sinners by the necessity of God's law to require retribution. By framing Christ's act of atoning grace in this fashion, the legal logic overshadows the heart of the gospel—the love of God in the death of Jesus for sinners' salvation.⁷

⁶ This is especially so in the classic presentations of penal substitution by Charles Hodge in the 19th C. and J.I. Packer in the 20th C. See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1940), 488-517, and J.I. Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution," in J.I. Packer, *Celebrating the Saving Work of God: The Collected Shorter Writings of J.I. Packer* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998), Vol. I, 85-123. For a critical assessment of Hodge's view, see Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 103-19, and Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 140-50. On satisfaction of justice and propitiation of wrath as the twin pillars of penal substitution, see my *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 85-90.

⁷ These brief critical observations on penal substitution raise further questions that cannot be addressed here. For a thorough examination and careful critique of penal substitution on biblical-theological grounds from an orthodox perspective, see *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 83-327, and my article, "Entrusting Ourselves to the One Who Judges Justly: Proclaiming the Cross in a World of Insecurity," *Direction: A Mennonite Brethren Forum* 42, No. 1 (Spring 2013): 17-25. For a constructive effort to redress the shortcomings of penal substitution, see I. Howard Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity* (London: Paternoster Press, 2007).

My aim here is to recover a perspective from which the church can, with conviction and clarity, proclaim the cross of Christ as the love of God for the reconciliation of sinners. To that end, I seek to retrieve two motifs by which orthodox theologians of the early church sought to explicate Jesus' death "for us and for our salvation." These motifs, each of which contrasts with the penal substitution theory, have continuing value for interpreting and proclaiming the gospel of God and sinners reconciled in Christ. I will use them to exposit a pair of passages, one from the Gospel of Luke and the other from an epistle of Paul.

Retrieving Ancient Motifs for Interpreting Jesus' Death

Christ Takes Our Place: Divine-Human "Exchange"

The first motif is the notion of the "exchange" of God-in-Christ and humanity through the Incarnation for our salvation. The germ of this motif is already evident in the apostolic writings of the New Testament. So Paul: "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9),⁸ and Peter: "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the unrighteous for the righteous, in order to bring you to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). By the Incarnation, Christ voluntarily takes the place of humanity in the "poverty" of our natural condition and sinful situation, and does so on our behalf—the "rich" one for the "poor" many, the righteous one for the unrighteous many—so that by his solidarity and suffering with us, through his life, death, and resurrection, he might rescue us from sin and reconcile us to God. These apostolic formulations have a three-part structure: Christ identifies as one with us by taking on ("assuming") the mortal conditions of human existence (solidarity); he acts on our behalf by taking on ("assuming") the moral liabilities of human sin (exchange); and he rescues us from sin and reconciles us to God (redemption).⁹

This motif is prominent in a famous passage from the 2nd-C.

⁸ All Scripture quotations are taken from the NRSV.

⁹ See *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 340-42. Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), proposed the term "interchange" to characterize this phenomenon. I concur with Hooker that "interchange" is more suitable than "exchange," but I use the latter expression here because it is used in translating the tradition that I want to retrieve.

document known as the Epistle to Diognetus:

Accordingly, when our iniquity had come to its full height, and it was clear beyond all mistaking that retribution in the form of punishment and death must be looked for, the hour arrived in which God had determined to make known from then onwards His loving-kindness and His power. How surpassing is the love and tenderness of God! In that hour, instead of hating us and rejecting us and remembering our wickedness against us, He showed how long-suffering he is. He bore with us, and in pity He took our sins upon Himself and gave His own Son as a ransom for us—the Holy for the wicked, the Sinless for sinners, the Just for the unjust, the Incorrupt for the corrupt, the Immortal for the mortal. . . . O sweet exchange! O unsearchable working! O benefits unhopd for!¹⁰

This ancient motif of Christ “for us” contrasts in two significant respects with the modern theory of penal substitution. First, God designs the Incarnation, by which the exchange of Christ and humanity for our salvation is accomplished, not in order to satisfy the law of retribution for sin but in spite of it: we *did* deserve punishment for our sins and we *should* have expected retribution from God—but God-in-Christ has acted to transcend retribution for the sake of our redemption, saving us from punishment by rescuing us from sin. Second, God’s motivation to forego punishment of sinners by forbearance of our sin in Christ is nothing other than God’s “surpassing love”—indeed, God’s retribution-transcending act of redemption in Christ through the cross is the distinctive disclosure of God’s patience with and fidelity toward humanity.

The exchange of God-in-Christ and humanity resounds throughout the writings of the early church on the meaning of the Incarnation as God’s work for our redemption, which was called the “economy” or “plan” of salvation (cf. Eph. 1:10, 3:9). This motif was given succinct expression by Irenaeus: the Son of God did “become what we are, that He might bring us

¹⁰ Epistle to Diognetus, ch. 9, in *Early Christian Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 147-48.

to be even what He is Himself.”¹¹ Irenaeus’s formulation was echoed by later writers. Athanasius (4th C.): “For he was incarnate that we might be made god.”¹² Gregory of Nazianzus (4th C.): “Man and God blended They became a single whole . . . in order that I might be made God to the same extent that he was made man.”¹³ Cyril of Alexandria (5th C.): “he took what was ours to be his very own so that we might have all that was his.”¹⁴ And Maximus the Confessor (7th C.):

By his gracious condescension God became man and is called man for the sake of man and by exchanging his condition for ours revealed the power that elevates man to God through his love for God and brings God down to man because of his love for man. By this blessed inversion, man is made God by divinization and God is made man by hominization.¹⁵

When these ancient writers speak of us being “made god by divinization,” they do not mean that we become literally divine any more than the doctrine of Incarnation means that God became simply human. Rather, they are stating in succinct terms the idea of *theosis*. The notion is that through the redemptive work of the Incarnation, by which God-in-Christ took on (“assumed”) our human nature, we are restored and completed in our human nature according to the likeness of God in Christ so that we “may become participants in the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

This motif of redemptive solidarity by divine-human exchange through the Incarnation, although long neglected in Western Christianity, has remained central in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes:

The Christian message of salvation can best be summed up in terms of *sharing*, of solidarity and identification. . . . Christ’s

¹¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5, in Phillip Schaff, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 526.

¹² Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 107.

¹³ Gregory of Nazianzus, in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), Oration 29.19, 86.

¹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 59.

¹⁵ Maximus the Confessor, Ambiguum 7.2, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 60.

Incarnation is already an act of salvation. By taking up our broken humanity into himself, Christ restores it. . . . The Incarnation, it was said, is an act of identification and sharing. God saves us by identifying himself with us. . . . The Cross signifies, in the most stark and uncompromising manner, that this act of sharing is carried to the utmost limits. . . . “The unassumed is unhealed”: but Christ our healer has assumed into himself everything, even death. . . . Christ’s suffering and death have, then, an objective value: he has done for us something we should be altogether incapable of doing without him. At the same time, we should not say that Christ has suffered “instead of us,” but rather that he has suffered *on our behalf*. . . . Christ offers us, not a way *round* suffering, but a way *through* it; not substitution, but saving companionship.¹⁶

It is thus not only by the cross, nor even by the cross and resurrection, but by way of the Incarnation as a whole—Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection—that we are saved: through the Incarnation, God-in-Christ identifies with us in the limits of our humanity and takes upon (or “assumes” into) himself the consequences of our sin through his suffering in life and death on the cross in order to redeem us from sin and restore us to life through his resurrection.¹⁷

God Becomes Human: Divine “Dilemma”

The second motif is the notion of the divine “dilemma.” Why would God become human in the first place? Why would God design such an “economy” of salvation? The notion of the divine dilemma was first articulated as an apologetic answer to these questions.

Athanasius, in his classic treatise *On the Incarnation* (4th C.), put forth the most famous explanation of this dilemma.¹⁸ Although God had

¹⁶ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 73, 78-79, 82 (original emphasis), quoting Gregory of Nazianzus (“The unassumed is the unhealed”).

¹⁷ For further explication and elaboration of the idea of divine-human exchange in Christ, see *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 339-59.

¹⁸ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, chaps. 2-10. Athanasius’ account is echoed by Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, 125-26.

created the human being in his own image for the purpose of enjoying communion with God, the human being had by free choice turned from God and fallen into sin, making himself liable to corruption and death. God could not abandon the human being to descend into oblivion even by his own disobedience; for then the work of God's Word would end in vain, which would be unworthy of God, who is true to his Word and faithful to his creation. Neither could God simply overlook the sin of his creatures; for then God would appear lax concerning his own law, which also would be unworthy of God, who is holy and just. What, then, was God, who is good, to do? How could God act to save his creation in a manner consistent with his character? God thus designed a "working" or "economy" both worthy of God and sufficient to save. God willed that the Word by whom the world was made should become human in order that, by the incarnate Word's righteous obedience on behalf of all humanity, God might rescue humanity from sin and death and restore humanity to righteousness and life, and so complete God's original purpose. Athanasius' account incorporates the motif of divine-human exchange: the Word of God became human in order that humans might be restored to God.¹⁹

Like the first motif, this one also contrasts with the modern penal substitution theory. Athanasius' classic explication affirms that God designs the economy of the Incarnation not to satisfy the demand of punishment for sin but to provide an *alternative* to punishment through Christ's life, death, and resurrection as a means of redemption. At the same time, Athanasius does not consider God-in-Christ's work of redemption by divine-human exchange as an alternative to *justice*. Indeed, God designs the exchange as a means of doing justice towards human disobedience in a manner consistent with God's character and faithfulness. God's justice works through the redemptive economy of Christ's Incarnation to put things aright. By means of the exchange, God works to reconcile humanity to God by renewing the divine image in humanity and restoring humanity to its proper place in the created order. In Athanasius's account, not only does God's justice not consist essentially in retributive punishment, it serves a restorative function.

¹⁹ For further exposition of Athanasius' account, see *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 362-66, and Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 169-93.

The Obedience of Christ in the Economy of Salvation

Before proceeding, we must not misconstrue the economy of salvation by means of divine-human exchange through the Incarnation. Especially when looking through the lens of the penal substitution theory, our mental vision tends to focus solely on Jesus' death as the sum total of God's salvation: Jesus' death saves sinners because Jesus "pays the penalty" for our sin by dying "in our place" on the cross. This way of seeing things overlooks the fact that, when explicating the economy of salvation, early Christian writers place their emphasis, not on Jesus' death by itself but on Jesus' *obedience* throughout the Incarnation, in life and death.

In Athanasius's account, "the works of the body" performed by Christ in obedience to God serve an essential function in the renewal of the human being according to the "image of God."²⁰ Likewise, in Cyril's account, Christ's self-emptying assumption of the natural limitations of the human condition underwrites both the soterial and exemplary functions of the Incarnation.²¹ Christ's obedience, even as far as the extremity of death, is not only the undoing of human disobedience before God but also the model for human obedience to God. Cyril writes:

The Word of God the Father . . . appeared to us in our likeness bringing help to our human condition in myriad ways . . . for us to have the beneficial knowledge of how far the limits of obedience should extend, by what wonderful ways it comes, how great is its reward, and what form it has. This was the reason Christ became our model in all these things. . . .²²

According to both Athanasius and Cyril, the economy of salvation through the divine-human exchange of the Incarnation unifies God's salvation and human ethics: Jesus' obedience is both the means of reconciliation of humanity to God and renewal of human nature (salvation), and the normative example for human conduct (ethics). In this regard, Athanasius and Cyril were consciously following the lead of the Apostle Paul.

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul recapitulates the history of humanity from

²⁰ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, chaps. 11-19.

²¹ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 101-106.

²² *Ibid.*, 102.

Adam to Christ, contrasting the old era of humanity “in Adam” and the new era of humanity “in Christ.” We might represent his account as follows:

OLD ERA (“IN ADAM”)	NEW ERA (“IN CHRIST”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of the human being (“first Adam”)• Sin by Adam, death through sin• Condemnation and death to all because all sin• Sin rules in death (“Dominion of sin”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incarnation of Christ (“second Adam”)• Obedience of Christ on behalf of all• Justification and life to all by Christ’s obedience• Righteousness rules in life (“Dominion of grace”)

Paul compacts all of this into consecutive, parallel formulas (Rom. 5:18-19):

Therefore, just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all,
so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.

For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners,
so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

He juxtaposes Adam’s disobedience resulting in condemnation and death “for all,” and Christ’s obedience resulting in justification and life “for all.” According to the penal substitution theory, we would have expected Paul to juxtapose human disobedience and Christ’s death—Christ’s death “pays the penalty” for all sinners. However, in speaking here of “one man’s act of righteousness” Paul has more in mind than the cross; indeed, he does not specifically mention Christ’s death. In Paul’s view, it is not Christ’s death by itself that saves us from sin. It is by Christ’s complete obedience *in life and death*, his obedience “to the point of death” (Phil. 2:8), an obedience of one on behalf of all, that many are made righteous “in Christ.”²³ And it is Christ’s self-emptying service and humble obedience, not only his suffering and death, that has been rewarded by God with resurrection and exaltation, and that will be recognized by all creation in the confession of Christ as Lord (Phil. 2:6-11). Whereas penal substitution sees an exchange between humanity’s

²³ Richard Hays, “Made New by One Man’s Obedience: Romans 5:12-21,” in ed. Mark D. Baker, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross: Contemporary Images of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 96-102.

sin and Christ's death as the means of atonement, Paul sees redemption as achieved by an exchange of disobedience/death for obedience/life: Adam's disobedience is exchanged for Christ's obedience, with the result that death by sin "in Adam" is exchanged for life by righteousness "in Christ."²⁴

Retrieving these two ancient motifs—the divine dilemma resolved by the Incarnation, and the divine-human exchange through the Incarnation—can serve the contemporary church in two ways: by giving us a window onto the work of God-in-Christ "for us and for our salvation" that better reflects the gospel than does the penal substitution view, and by helping us to proclaim the gospel more effectively to a world needing reconciliation to God. I will now use these two motifs as a pair of lenses to bring into focus God-in-Christ's work of reconciliation on account of God's steadfast love, as seen in two Scripture texts: Jesus' parable of "the lost son" (Luke 15:11-32) and Paul's "message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:16-21).²⁵

The Drama of Reconciliation: Father and Son

The parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32) is perhaps the best known and most loved of Jesus' parables. We readily see Jesus' point in telling the story: the father presents a picture of God, who compassionately seeks to reconcile sinners and restore the lost; so great is God's love that God, and all heaven, rejoices when even one lost sinner returns to the family of God (15:7, 10). This parable is so familiar that we might be tempted to take the father and his forgiveness for granted—and fail to see what the father has done for his son and what love has cost him. To gain the full measure of this love, let us retrace the drama, observing parallels with the motifs of dilemma and exchange.²⁶

²⁴ See also *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 289-91.

²⁵ The Revised Common Lectionary pairs these passages for the fourth Sunday of Lent during Year C.

²⁶ My parsing of the drama in this parable has been helpfully informed by Werner Mischke, *The Father's Love: A Story Told by Jesus Christ, Luke 15:11-32* (Scottsdale, AZ: Mission ONE, 2012) and by Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 156-65. I assume that the reader is generally familiar with the parable and thus I do not cite it in total. For our present purposes, I restrict our attention to the relationship between the father and the younger son.

The Son's Demand (Luke 15:11-12a)

“There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’” What is the younger son demanding of his father? Why is his demand offensive? He is asking for his part of the inheritance—he wants what he has coming to him, and he wants it now rather than later. This may seem a bold and brash thing for a young man to ask of his father, but he is asking only for what is his, after all, which seems fair. Except he’s not asking for what is his now but for what is supposed to be his in the future—what will be rightfully his only once his father has died. The son is thus asking his father in effect to declare himself dead so that his property can be distributed. Moreover, while claiming what his father owes him, he is neglecting what he owes his father. As the younger son, he has the customary obligation to care for his father until his father dies; by taking now what would belong to him only after his father’s death, he is abandoning his obligations. The son’s demand dishonors his father—and thus disobeys God (Exod. 20:12). The son presents a picture of humanity that has dishonored God by disobedience.

What is a father to do in the face of such an insulting, presumptuous demand? Certainly, he has no obligation to say yes, and perhaps even has an obligation to say no. At the very least, conventional wisdom would say, the father should give that rude boy the rod to teach him who’s who and what’s what (Prov. 13:24)! We might even go further: Because the son is in effect asking his father to declare himself dead so he can have his property while abandoning his obligations, perhaps the father should do likewise and declare the son dead to him, deny him his inheritance, and abandon his obligations to the son. Perhaps the father, to defend his honor, should declare that his son is no longer worthy of the family name and simply throw him out of the house.

The Father's Dilemma (Luke 15:12b)

Far from refusing or rejecting him, the father accedes to his son’s demand. Why? The demand presents a dilemma for the father. We might imagine his internal conversation: “*On the one hand, if I declare that my dishonorable son is no longer a son to me, then I’m saying that I’m no longer a father to him. I would deny my obligations as a father and so prove false to myself. I can’t do that! On the other hand, if I don’t defend my honor against my son’s*

offense, then I'm taking that dishonor upon myself. If I don't disown my son for dishonoring me, then I risk dishonoring myself. To remain true to myself as a father, I must remain loyal to my son. But to remain loyal to him, I must be willing to bear the burden of his dishonor. Can I do that?"

The father thus faces a dilemma similar to the one God faces in Athanasius's account: What is a good father to do? The choice is about what kind of father he is to be. The father's commitment to his son despite all reflects what the poets and prophets of Israel called *hesed*, the steadfast loyalty characterizing God's love for his people. *Hesed* is God's characteristic disposition to remain true to himself and faithful to his promises despite his people's disloyalty and disobedience. *Hesed* is thus God's moral resolve to bear the burden of keeping faith with an unfaithful people. By choosing to keep true to both himself and his son, the father displays God's steadfast love for his people.

The choice to be a faithful father toward an unfaithful son is very risky and, potentially, very costly. To divide the estate and allow the land to be liquidated more than puts the family farm at risk of failure; it puts the family name in jeopardy of dishonor. In a culture in which land is allotted by family and belonging to the people means belonging to the land, to lose the ancestral allotment is to risk disgrace.

By acceding to his son's demand yet remaining loyal as a father, the father takes a great burden upon himself. If the son's venture with the father's property does not go well, the greater blame for the son's sins will fall on the father, not the son. While the son might be forgiven the impudence of youth, the father in the wisdom of age has no excuse—he knows what is at stake. The father, in order to remain steadfast toward his son, not only endures dishonor from him but chooses to risk disgrace on his behalf. Here we see the scandal of the story, embedded at the beginning: the father, on account of his steadfast love, is willing to suffer shame for his son's sake. This parallels the scandal of grace displayed at the cross: God-in-Christ willingly suffers shame in order to demonstrate love by dying for the undeserving—the weak, ungodly, sinners (Rom. 5:6-8).

The Son's Descent (Luke 15:13-16)

As we expect, things do not go well with the son. Having denied his obligations to his father and dissolved the bonds of loyalty to his family, he

leaves home and lives for himself. He pursues what pleases him as far as he can, but his excursion into excess leaves him empty. He worships his wants with all his heart, but his idolatry of indulgence leaves him indigent. Having aspired to be the master of his life, he is now reduced to being a slave to his stomach. From dishonoring his father and denying his obligations, he descends into disgrace, defiling himself by pursuing a life worthy of the pigs he feeds, and degrading himself by envying the pigs their food. He now sits in a pit of shame he has dug for himself. Here the son pictures the plight of humanity ensnared by its own sin and needing a savior (Rom. 1:18-32).

What is the father's part in all this? The father lets his son go. This, too, is a deliberate choice—and it has its costs. The father could try to mitigate the foreseeable results of the son's foolishness. He could put the inheritance into a trust fund so the son can't spend it all, or he could send a servant to follow the son and keep an eye on him. But he doesn't. He allows his son the freedom to fail. He lets him live as he chooses and suffer the consequences.

However, the consequences are costly not only to the son. Although out on his own, he is never simply an independent agent acting only for himself. In a culture in which identity is inextricable from family, the honorable act of one member accrues to the honor of the whole family and the disgracefulness of one disgraces all. By continuing to claim his son as his own, the father therefore implicitly chooses to own the consequences of his son's choices; the sins of the son will exact a price on the father's honor. Here we see the full depth of the father's love: by remaining steadfast in loyalty, the father willingly assumes liability for his son's liberty. Here too we see foreshadowed the father's exchange with his son: in order to remain steadfastly faithful to him to the full extent of the son's unfaithfulness, the father must be willing to descend as deep in love as the son descends in dishonor. He must be willing, that is, to take his son's place in the pit of shame.

The Son's Return and the Father's Embrace (Luke 15:17-20)

The son realizes at last both the depth of his disgrace and the desperation of his situation. Although he has dug the pit into which he has fallen, he cannot help himself out of it and reclaim his place in his father's house. He can leave the pig pen behind, but the stench of shame will still cling to him. So he aims at something lower—to be taken back as a servant rather than a son—and

heads for home. While he has lost his claim to be recognized by his father as a son, the father remains free to reclaim him and restore him to his place in the family. For the father to do so, however, he must first remove the shame from his son—he must do for him what his son cannot do for himself. The father takes decisive action to do just that: as soon as he sees his son, he runs to him and embraces him. Before the great feast, the fatted calf, the sandals, the ring, even the fine robe—before all these things, we see what the father’s steadfast love will cost him.

The son’s return and the father’s embrace take place not within the walled courts of the family home but out in the open space of the town square. Long before the son reaches home, his father runs to meet him. Evidently, the father has been watching and waiting for him. The neighbors have likely been watching and wondering about the father, and they probably have a firm opinion about what he should do to the son: shame him and shun him! No doubt they are ready to do their part to pronounce judgment on this disreputable son.

If the father is to restore his son to honor, he must first rescue him from the judgment of the neighbors. If and when his son returns, the father must be the first to reach him—before the neighbors hurl their taunts (and possibly their stones) at him. By embracing and thus owning his son in view of the neighbors, the father personally shields him from public shaming. In doing so, taking the part of one disgraced, the father puts himself in the position of disgrace. The neighbors’ accusing cries—“Shame on him!”—directed toward the son are now redirected toward the father—“Shame on you!” By wrapping his son with himself, the father takes the disgrace upon himself, absorbing the shame of the son’s sins into his own body and bearing the burden of shame for him. Here we see fulfilled the father’s exchange with his son: the father takes the place of the one disgraced, taking his son’s shame upon himself by taking his dishonored son into his arms.

The Son’s Restoration by the Father’s Grace (Luke 15:21-24)

The father now reconciles his son to himself and restores him to honor. After the son confesses his sin and unworthiness, but before he can offer to be a servant, the father reclaims him as his son and returns him to his place in the family. The robe and the ring signify that he is a full member of the father’s

house—a son, not a servant. The feast with the fatted calf announces to all, family and neighbors, that the one once dishonored is now to be honored and made worthy of the family name.

The drama of father and son exhibits both the father's dilemma in dealing with his disobedient son and the father's exchange with him in the act of reconciliation. The father cannot disown him without becoming an unfaithful father; at the same time, he cannot overlook his son's disobedience without becoming an unjust father. On account of his steadfast love for his son, and to maintain his own integrity, he takes his son's place in disgrace so that, by his act of grace, he might rescue his son from shame and restore him to his place of honor. Thus the parable replicates the three-fold drama of the divine economy: remaining steadfast in love for his son to the full depth of his son's depravity (solidarity), and taking his son's place of dishonor by bearing the burden of his sin and shame (exchange), the father rescues his son from sin and shame and reconciles his son to himself, restoring him to the place of honor by his act of grace (redemption).²⁷

The Drama of Reconciliation: God and Humanity

Having seen the father's love through the lenses of dilemma and exchange, we can now see that the reconciliation of father and son in the parable is a microcosm of the reconciliation of God and humanity as proclaimed by Paul's message. The drama of the father's steadfast love, costly choices, and reconciling actions presents a picture in miniature of what Paul means when he says, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ . . . ; in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. . . ." (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Humanity's Disobedience and God's Dilemma

Let us now return to the beginning of the whole story. God has created human beings with the purpose that he is to be their God and they are to be his people. To this end, God has given his children the obligations proper to God's people. Humans are to worship only God their creator, steward the land God has provided, and love their "brothers and sisters." At the same

²⁷ For further discussion of this parable as a counter-theme to retributive justice, see *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 382-86.

time, God has granted them the freedom to choose whether they will honor God or refuse their obligations. In fact, from the start we have refused our obligations as God's children and lived for ourselves: we have made other gods, plundered and spoiled the land, and murdered our kin. We have disobeyed and dishonored God—and disgraced ourselves. Seeking to be our own masters, we have only become slaves to sin.

God thus faces a dilemma like that faced by the father in the parable: What to do with disobedient and dishonorable children? Like the father, God makes two characteristic choices. First, God allows his children to go their own way; he gives them up to sin, letting them make their choices and suffer the consequences (Isa. 64:5-7; Ps. 81:11-12; Rom. 1:24-32). Second, God resolves to remain steadfast toward them, to love them always, no matter what: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness (*hesed*) to you" (Jer. 31:3); "I will heal their disloyalty, I will love them freely" (Hos. 14:4; cf. Isa. 49:14-15; Jer. 31:20; Hos. 11:8-9). These deliberate choices, characteristic of God's loyal love, are costly to God: God grants his children the freedom to be unfaithful but commits himself to the burden of keeping faith with them.

Although God lets us go our own way, God never lets go of us in his heart; although giving us up to our sins, God never gives up on us, persisting in steadfastness, pursuing us with love even when we wander far away. Again and again God compassionately sends prophets to convict us of sin and call us back to faithfulness (cf. Jeremiah), graciously offers us a covenant of loyalty, and remains loyal to his covenant promises despite our repeated disloyalty (cf. Hosea). Finally, in fulfillment of those promises, God sends his own Son to bring his wayward children—his lost sheep—back into the fold of fidelity.

Christ's Exchange and Humanity's Reconciliation

In Christ, God, ever faithful, loves us to the very end, even to the shameful end of our worst sins—all the way to death, even death on a cross (Rom. 5:6-8; Phil. 2:6-8). The cross is God's compassionate and costly embrace of disobedient and disgraced humanity. As the father embraces his disobedient and disgraced son in open view, so God embraces his disobedient and disgraced children through the public display of the cross. As the father's act of love in reconciling his son to himself is costly to the father, so God's act

of love in reconciling humanity in Christ through the cross is costly to God. Embracing us in Christ through the cross, God takes our disgrace, removes it from us, and takes it upon himself in Christ. This is the scandal of the cross: by his death on our behalf, Christ voluntarily took our part, absorbing the shame of our sins into his body and bearing the burden of our shame; Christ became shame for us. Just as the father defended his son from the neighbors' accusations, taking their curses upon himself, so also Christ defended us from sin's accusation, taking it—the "curse" of sin—upon himself: Christ on the cross became accursed for us (Gal. 3:13).²⁸

There is more. Because Christ bore the shame of our sins in his body on the cross, our shame was buried with his crucified body in the grave; and because God honored Christ for his faithfulness by raising him with a glorified body (Phil. 2:9-11), our shame was left behind in the grave. Whereas our sin and shame were crucified and buried with Christ, we have been raised to life and honor in him; through baptism, in which we participate in his death and resurrection, we have been rescued from death under the dominion of sin and restored to righteousness in the dominion of grace (Rom. 6:1-14).

Paul compacts all this into a single formula of divine-human exchange: "For our sake, [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Peter expresses this exchange motif in a similar formula: "[Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). To draw the parallel with the parable, we might rephrase these formulas in terms of honor/shame: for our sake, God was willing that Christ, who was without shame, might bear our shame in his body and become shame for us, so that in him we might be freed from shame and become honorable unto God. On account of God's steadfast love and loyalty toward us, God was willing that Christ (at the cross) take our position of disgrace and descend into the pit of destruction we had dug by our own sins, in order that through him (by the resurrection) we might be rescued from our sinful and shameful

²⁸ Whereas Paul depicts Christ as taking the place of the accused, the penal substitution theory puts God into the position of the accuser and thus effectively separates God from Christ in the work of reconciliation. See Douglas M. Jones, *Dismissing Jesus: How We Evade the Way of the Cross* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 157-71.

situation, and be restored to a position of righteousness and honor with God.

Here, then, is the good news of God and sinners reconciled in Christ: God, steadfast in love and loyalty toward a sinful and shameful humanity, has welcomed us home in Christ. We who were once dishonored have now been clothed in honor by Christ. Because he bore the disgrace of our sins on the cross and took it to the grave, we can leave it behind—it is dead and buried. Having been freed from slavery to sin through his death and resurrection, we may live for righteousness in the risen Christ, fulfilling our obligations as God's children and honoring God as our Father (Rom. 8:1-4). In Christ we are God's people made new—"a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), commissioned to "the ministry of reconciliation" in the name of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Recapitulation

The ancient motifs of divine dilemma and divine-human exchange enable us to reframe the drama of reconciliation in Jesus' parable of the lost son and Paul's message of the cross, and to revision God-in-Christ's work of reconciliation, with two benefits for the contemporary church. First, as an alternative to the popular penal substitution theory, these motifs present a way of narrating the cross of Christ and proclaiming its saving power that keeps God's steadfast love in focus, and holds together the entire Incarnation—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—as a single economy of salvation. Second, it helps us to see the climax in the drama of reconciliation—the father's embrace of his dishonorable son, Jesus' death on behalf of disgraced humanity—not as God's satisfaction of the legal requirement of retributive punishment but as God's provision of a redemptive alternative to retribution. Recognizing that God-in-Christ's gracious alternative to retribution is not an alternative to justice enables us to revision God's justice through the cross as transcending retribution for the sake of redemption (cf. Rom. 3:21-26) and, accordingly, motivates a restorative vision for our own justice-doing.²⁹

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek is a lecturer in philosophy and religion at Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio, and adjunct instructor of religion at Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio.

²⁹ See *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, and Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

Scott Thomas Prather. *Christ, Power and Mammon: Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder in Dialogue*. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013.

Jamie Pitts. *Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder's Sociological Theology*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013.

In his introduction to *Christ, Power and Mammon*, Scott Prather notes the “near absence of any sustained treatment of our theme [of the powers] in Barth and Yoder studies” (3). Jamie Pitts, in his introduction to *Principalities and Powers*, concurs that this theme in Yoder’s corpus “has not been reviewed systematically in its own terms” (xxxvi). If their assessments are right, then their books have more than begun to fill this lacuna. Both works are revised UK doctoral theses, each putting Yoder’s theology in dialogue with another figure—Karl Barth for Prather, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for Pitts. Read together they offer an interesting argument: Barth’s *exousiology* (theology of the powers) needs Yoder’s “clear historical-structural emphasis” in order to resist readings of Barth as “non-ideological and thus socially conservative” (Prather, 7), while Yoder’s “sociological theology” needs Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology in order to offer “an improved, non-reductive social theory” (Pitts, xxxv).

Prather begins his volume with describing Barth’s *exousiology*, drawing on three post-World War I texts: “Justification and Justice,” an excursus from *Church Dogmatics* III/3, and a section from *The Christian Life* on “the Lordless Powers.” Barth’s conception of the powers is “as the sheer antithesis . . . or total corruption . . . of creaturely being and activity” (51). In chapter 2, Prather describes Yoder’s *exousiology* as “spurred on by a negative assessment of Niebuhr’s political heritage” (53) while drawing positively from Reformed theologian Hendrik Berkhof. Given recent arguments for development in Yoder’s thought, this chapter would benefit from attention to chronology; still, it provides a nice overview of Yoder’s *exousiology*.

Prather then turns to how eschatology functions in Barth and Yoder’s *exousiologies*, drawing out both continuities between them and ways that “Yoder’s voice is finally shown to be crucial,” given his “more sociopolitically conscious account” (107). In his penultimate chapter, the author applies this account to political and economic power, “the demonization of which Barth names Leviathan and Mammon” (163). Notably, this chapter includes an

illuminating survey of Yoder's sympathetic critiques of liberation theology. Finally, Prather incorporates insights from William Stringfellow and Jacques Ellul—as well as the early “socialist” Barth—to offer a contemporary critique of capitalism, concluding with Hurricane Katrina as an illustration of how “self-serving economic power (Mammon) reaches its highest inhumanities through the manipulation of the world-ordering powers of law and might (Leviathan)” (234).

Pitts's book is composed of six chapters, each addressing a theme in Yoder's work: creation, theological anthropology, violence, theological method, ecclesial politics, and Christian particularity. Each chapter follows a three-fold pattern. First, Pitts offers a chronological overview of Yoder's writings on the powers with respect to the chapter's theme and discusses criticisms of Yoder's work relevant to it. Next, the author explicates concepts from Bourdieu's work pertinent to the theme. Finally, applying Bourdieu's concepts and “creedal affirmations of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ” (xlii), Pitts attempts to “revise” Yoder's theology in broadly “Yoderian” ways that are more capable of withstanding criticisms.

For example, in chapter 3, “Revising Yoder's Theology of Violence,” he describes Yoder's theology of violence in terms of the powers before discussing four criticisms of it: “Yoder insufficiently recognizes that violence requires discernment; Yoder's focus on violence misses out on the broader meaning of the fall; Yoder fails to relate his critique of violence to the judgment of God; and Yoder is ambiguous as to the legitimacy of state violence in the order of providence” (72). After interacting with the sources of these criticisms, Pitts turns to Bourdieu's writing on violence and domination, particularly his distinction between “physical and symbolic violences” (83). Pitts describes how “Bourdieu's theory of violence and domination . . . facilitates a revision of Yoder's theology of violence and the fall that responds to critics” (91). This pattern allows each chapter to stand on its own, though it does lead to some redundancy when the book is read straight through.

Both these books take exousiology as their starting point, but each employs this theme for different purposes. Although Prather discusses Barth and Yoder at length, ultimately his aim is to use their work for his own constructive account. In doing so, he offers a view of the powers that addresses global capitalism more directly than previous accounts. In contrast, Pitts uses

Yoder's exousiology as a foray into Yoder's broader theology. As such, his work will be of more direct interest to Yoder scholars, although his proposed "sociological theology" also has promise for further development.

While these volumes have distinct aims, they share a few limitations. First, both appear to be only lightly revised theses, evident in Prather's book by numerous self-referential markers. Repeatedly the reader is reminded of arguments made in previous chapters or coming in later chapters. Their preponderance seems unnecessary in a text with otherwise clear, cogent arguments and structure. In a preface Pitts notes several of his book's shortcomings, which stemmed from needing to complete his project prior to academic employment. One hopes that a subsequent volume will build on suggestions made by his examiners and outside readers, as at least two are essential to evaluating the success of his project, namely whether his "proposed 'sociological theology' is a viable theological method" and whether a secular sociologist such as Bourdieu can be appropriated for a theological project (ix).

Both works also raise the question of what it means to put two thinkers "in dialogue," or to use one to "revise" the work of another. Prather argues in early chapters that Yoder is a "crucial" addition to Barth's account, but in his conclusion Yoder drops out and is replaced by the early "socialist" Barth. Pitts suggests that his revisions are "improvements to Yoder's writings" that are nonetheless "Yoderian" (xxxix). Yet it is unclear whether these revisions are drawing out what is implicit in Yoder's work or correcting Yoder's errors. Pitts doubts that "the search for a definitive 'historical Yoder' will result in a new consensus" (xv), but it is uncertain why such doubt precludes him from committing to his own reading of Yoder.

Finally, for works addressing Yoder's writing on power and the powers, it is regrettable that neither text engages substantively with Yoder's own misuses of power that have been public for years though only recently receiving sustained attention. Pitts discusses this omission in his preface, while Prather fails to mention it. But as Pitts notes, this issue is one "that scholars must face squarely" (xv). As they do so, I believe they will find *Christ, Power and Mammon* and *Principalities and Powers* to be valuable resources.

David C. Cramer, doctoral student, Dept. of Religion, Baylor University, Waco, Texas

Peggy Faw Gish, *Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013.

In *Walking Through Fire*, Peggy Faw Gish recounts her experience of living among and working with Iraqi citizens under the umbrella of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) from the summer of 2004 until the summer of 2011. It is a follow-up to her first book, *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace* (Harrisonburg/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2004). Gish identifies herself as a “mother, grandmother, community mediator, and a member of the Church of the Brethren,” and this initial description sets the stage for the care and love obvious in this present book, and indicates the framework guiding her interpretation of her experience.

The author offers numerous stories about her encounters with Iraqis and their perspectives as told to her during the occupation of Iraq by American military troops. In particular, she describes living conditions within a war zone and the daily emotional struggles of citizens attempting to persevere. Within these stories she shares her personal frustrations and sorrows in trying to minister to those around her. Her pacifistic, religious commitment is readily apparent.

Gish emphasizes that the CPT's political role in Iraq was one of solidarity with war victims and as a third-party witness to the power structures. This dual role of Christian ministry accompanied with physical witness is a form of nonviolent resistance particular to Anabaptists of the 21st-century (among others), but is reminiscent of nonviolent solidarity during the civil rights movement and in the Nazi era. The CPT presence includes myth-busting when it comes to war stories, according to Gish. She attempts to be a different voice than that of the “win or lose” mentality often accompanying military actions.

The nagging question arising from Gish's work comes from the strong anti-military view that accompanies the Anabaptist tradition. Throughout the book Gish blames the war machine and American intervention for creating an unlivable and dangerous situation for Iraqi citizens, which is an accurate evaluation from the stories she tells. However, she also recounts how many Iraqi citizens blame Western countries for not doing enough and for not becoming more involved in cases of human rights violations. This leads to questions as to how any outside influence could have occurred in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, and, if intervention does not occur, how guilty

countries are for not intervening.

Gish raises important questions about human rights and the responsibility to protect, but does not offer genuine answers. In part this is because her focus is on the current situation and does not delve into long-standing issues resulting from a colonization mentality still extant within and around formerly colonized countries.

This lack also highlights a larger problem. There is a dire need for more work within Anabaptist theology to consider a rigorous justice theology for the global level. Just as a peace theology developed as a cultural and contextual result of faith during the changing world of Dirk Willems's time, justice is begging for Anabaptist theology to form a Christian response to international violence during our time. If war and occupation are not the answer to human violation, what are the answers? How does the Anabaptist community speak justice from a theological perspective to the global power machines that are called government? Does our Anabaptist history of "refusing to pass judgments in worldly disputes," as stated in *The Schleithem Confession*, violate the Christian ethic of empathy for victims? Is physical witness enough? Continuing globalization puts pressure on our previous theology to reformulate, from a peace witness, our conversation with the world and the prevailing understanding of justice.

Gish concedes that she does not have the answers to this problem. However, she makes a good point that individual practitioners must bring themselves to the place where their gifts can be used to minister and witness to events oppressing the weak. She also shows that emotional awareness and honesty are necessities in any approach. While her anger at governmental and impersonal systems may have caused her to miss the issues of colonization on a large scale, she does indicate that CPT participants are acutely aware of colonization in their own encounters. They take precautions against coming in as another colonizer by assessing their own reactions and their openness to being ministers to victims of violence, rather than overseers.

Gish offers a sensitive, thorough account that brings personal stories to the forefront while addressing issues of peace and war important to Anabaptist Christians. Her book is not only a valuable addition to Anabaptist theology, but a vigorous testimony for laypersons and peace practitioners.

Annette Mosher, Assistant Professor of Ethics, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

J. Kevin Livingston. *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013.

South African David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* is one of the most, if not the most, significant books in missiology in recent decades. In *A Missiology of the Road*, part of the American Society of Missiology Monograph Series, Livingston takes us behind Bosch's magisterial *Transforming Mission* and explores the work of Bosch (1929-1992) before writing that book. Livingston digs down into the life and thought of Bosch to show where *Transforming Mission* came from.

Part one explores context, first an in-depth description of the roots of Afrikaner identity and Apartheid and then a biographical sketch of Bosch. Part two gives an overview of the development of Bosch's theology of mission and evangelism before *Transforming Mission*. It explores Bosch's theological method, the historical and theological context of mission, and the biblical foundation for mission. The last chapter of the section explores Bosch's pre-1990 writings on the relationship between evangelism and mission, the meaning of mission, the meaning of evangelism, and an evaluation of the church growth movement. Part three explores Bosch's understanding of the church in mission through three theological themes: eschatology, ecclesiology, and soteriology.

Giving almost a sixth of the book to the first section on South Africa and biographical material signals the author's intention not just to survey Bosch's writings but to place them in context. It is a strength of the book, but I often wished for more. Although at times Livingston wove in the South African situation throughout the chapter, in other chapters he barely mentioned it. The author does succeed, however, in giving a sense not just of Bosch's missiological thought but also his lived-out practice—and the relation between the two. In the introduction Livingston states that Bosch lived “in creative tension, a bridge builder between races, church denominations, and conflicting political and theological perspectives” (xiii).

In the effort to cross the chasm between two groups a bridge builder must foster relationships on both sides. Bosch did that. He regularly attended the mission gatherings of both the World Council of Churches and the evangelical Lausanne movement. He did not just attend; he engaged.

He affirmed and critiqued things about both, and continually sought positions that built on the strengths of both. Similarly, although he became an active critic of Apartheid he did not leave the Dutch Reformed Church. He acknowledged that would be the easier path, but he sought to remain a prophetic voice within rather than sever the relationship. Livingston has given us a gift by putting various Bosch's writings in context and helping us see which group on which side of the chasm he was addressing and how they related to the chasm itself.

Anabaptists will resonate with Bosch's concept of the church as alternative community and the central place he gives that concept in his work. They may also be interested to note and explore the influence of C. Norman Kraus and John H. Yoder in Bosch's work. Chapter seven, on the church as alternative community, is not, however, just an opportunity for us to feel affirmed in our position. It is an opportunity to read a Reformed theologian adopting Anabaptist thought and bringing it into conversation with his own tradition. The bridge building efforts mentioned above are present in this chapter as well.

Who might utilize this book? Most obviously it provides a great resource for those familiar with Bosch's *Transforming Mission* who desire to better understand the author and see the genesis and development of ideas in that volume. Another reason to read Livingston's book is to get more of Bosch. Readers will encounter streams of his thought here that are not present in *Transforming Mission*. If your interest is South Africa, the Church and Apartheid, this book has much to offer—especially on the theological roots of Apartheid and the dynamics of reform movements, and resistance to them, within the Dutch Reformed Church. To benefit from Livingston's book it is not necessary to have previously read Bosch. *A Missiology of the Road* provides a great overview and introduction to many key themes in missiology today, and offers the advantage of seeing those themes explored in a particular context.

Mark D. Baker, Professor of Mission and Theology, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California

Oliver O'Donovan. *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology 1*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013.

Oliver O'Donovan, professor emeritus at University of Edinburgh, here begins a projected three-volume study of Christian ethics by considering its framework before moving on in future volumes to explore ethical actions (*Finding and Seeking*) and ends-of-action (*Entering into Rest*). This first volume “is concerned primarily with the form and matter of Christian ethics as a discipline, in relation to its material (moral thought and moral teaching), its setting among the humanistic faculties of study, and its proper shape, a triadic trajectory in which self, world, and time are reflected and restored” (xi).

The present book serves as an “induction,” not so much as an introduction. The difference is significant for O'Donovan. A standard introduction shows the grounds and scope of something entirely new; an induction signals that we are being made more aware of trains of thought, inquiry, and communication that were part of us long before we were conscious of them (1). O'Donovan wishes the reader to be alert to agency, world, and time; indeed, the controlling metaphor of his first chapter is that of waking, understood as a New Testament imperative, a metaphor that “stands guard over the birth of a renewed moral responsibility” (9).

The “triadic trajectory” allows the author to stress what he believes must be part of the pursuit of ethics as theology. The emphasis on the *world* underscores the importance of searching for the truth about the world in which we find ourselves; we have a “vast stake in description” (11). Ethics as theology must also pay attention to the *self* as an active agent. Attention to *time* forces us to face the future immediately before us, the next moment in which our moral action may be expressed. Without attentiveness to these three dimensions of ethics as theology, O'Donovan argues, we face potential moral mishaps: lack of reference to the world generates action that parts company with the conditions of nature; ethics without the self becomes mere problem-solving; and morality without reference to time fails to concentrate on what is fit to be done in this time and place (17, 18).

Having laid the groundwork, the author then addresses moral thinking understood as practical reason, moral communication and the

social dimension of ethics, and moral theory, which reaches out toward both the doctrinal and the practical. In his final chapter, he offers a transition to the projected second and third volumes. In the present volume he shows that self, world, and time structure *moral reasoning*; once recovered and converted, they can form the structure of *theological ethics* as it pursues faith, hope, and love. Volumes two and three will “explore these stages on action’s way” (103).

This first volume of the trilogy continues O’Donovan’s work in political theology—*The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (1999) and *The Ways of Judgment* (2008). He has worked hard to resist any substantive separation of political theology and political ethics; his resistance to a false dualism was especially evident in *The Ways of Judgment*. This resistance is on full display in the new project.

A further connection to his political theology project consists in O’Donovan’s embrace and pursuit of what he terms as “an architectural enterprise.” He means to bring together trains of thought that have different inner logics. This is similar to his approach in *The Desire of the Nations*, which displayed an impressive architectonic structure. However, there as here, it is not always obvious to me that such an impressive structure is necessary; in some cases, it seems potentially distorting to the material under discussion.

The more direct connection of the present volume is to O’Donovan’s earlier study, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (1986; 2nd ed. 1994). He refers to it a number of times, revealing that he now wants “to ask further about the gift of the Spirit and its implications for the forceful moral objectivism” of that work. He wants to take stock of, and give a better account of, what he now sees as a flat and this-worldly account of authority. He also seeks to give a fuller account of the resurrection for ethics as theology.

Self, World, and Time is a continuation of O’Donovan’s work on evangelical ethics, but to think that his political theology work was a kind of interlude would be a mistake. O’Donovan continues here to contribute to Christian thought and practice in an exemplary way, combining immense learning in order to refine a serious vision for faithful Christian discipleship.

Paul Doerksen, Associate Professor, Theology and Anabaptist Studies,
Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

J. Denny Weaver. *The Nonviolent God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013.

After *The Nonviolent Atonement* (second ed., 2001), J. Denny Weaver has come out with a new book that again centers on the theme of nonviolence, *The Nonviolent God*. Just like the former, the latter urgently calls upon the church to recognize nonviolence as its calling and as a key motivating factor. Weaver is known for his commitment to a theology of nonviolence from a Mennonite perspective. However, in his introduction we encounter the diplomatic style of a theologian trying to connect to a wider public: “Although the theology to follow does pose some alternative images to and alongside the classic formulations, it is established on an ecumenical foundation” (8).

The first part of the book picks up the argument Weaver developed in *The Nonviolent Atonement*. Those familiar with his earlier work will find familiar things, but they will also discover new insights. Those who did not read the previous book or who are not familiar with his position will get a firm introduction here. However, readers will need to pause after chapter 3 to reflect on Weaver’s perspective on atonement, called “Narrative Christus Victor,” as it truly reflects a paradigm shift. Readers sympathetic towards his ideas will probably be convinced by his passionate style. However, those wrestling with his interpretation of the cross might have hoped for a more profound analysis of the satisfaction theories Weaver rejects—both the Anselmian theory and the later theory of penal substitution atonement, as well as the moral influence theory of Peter Abelard.

Having formulated his theological stance in the first part of the book, Weaver in chapter 4—“Divine Violence: Bible versus Bible”—demonstrates how the Narrative Christus Victor approach might help us deal with the violent images of God we encounter in the biblical narratives. In fact, this chapter is central to the argument: “The key to dealing with this longstanding and prevalent challenge to the nonviolent character of God is to recall that God is revealed in Jesus Christ” (104). That is, God most fully revealed himself in the life and teachings, the death and resurrection, of Christ. If we use this narrative of the nonviolent Jesus as the norm, Weaver says, we can shed a different light on those stories that seem to portray a violent God.

The author presents a new reading of presumably violent stories, for example the story of the Egyptian army hunting Moses and the Israelites,

building on the work of Old Testament scholar Millard Lind. The Israelites were able to cross the Red Sea because they passed on dry ground that could carry the “lighter travelling” Israelites (110), but the Egyptian army chariots got stuck. Then the water took its natural course again. It was a deliberate choice of the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites and put themselves at risk. There was no supernatural event involved. The evil ones suffered from the consequences of their own deeds. “God is always loving,” says Weaver, “but respects the choice of the evildoers to continue in their evil ways, thus condemning themselves to a ‘hell’ of their own making” (50). This relates to another central element in his theology: free will. Rather than ascribing violence to God, we should recognize that violence originates with human beings, Weaver argues.

In the second part of this volume, the author lays out some consequences for the church, stressing the importance of a “lived theology.” He demonstrates how the concept of restorative justice mirrors the interpretation of Narrative Christus Victor, even if there is no theological argument supporting it. He sets the agenda for the church in dealing with topics like racism, gender, and social and economic inequality.

I would have liked Weaver to go deeper into the kind of violence ascribed to God in the OT, analyzing and discussing both traditional interpretations that presume a violent God and the nonviolent alternatives. He could then have discussed consequences for the church in a third book that could be called *The Nonviolent Church*. Nevertheless, he does demonstrate the relevance of talking about a nonviolent God: God calls the church to follow the path of nonviolence in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. This also demonstrates the relevance of further studies on the question of God and violence in Scripture.

Fulco van Hulst, Assistant for (Peace) Theology and Ethics, VU University Amsterdam/Mennonite Seminary, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast, eds. *Mothering Mennonite*. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

Mothering Mennonite is a laudable first step in examining in a concentrated way the profound influence of mothers on Mennonite identity. This aspect of Mennonite life has not received adequate attention, but this book vividly details how mothering, especially in relationship to daughters and granddaughters, affects, and is shaped by, faith and culture. The collection of sixteen essays is only a first step, because it deals almost exclusively with Mennonites of European descent living in Canada and the US; only two essays explore mothering in other settings—Mexico and Colombia.

The editors chose an interdisciplinary approach and encouraged personal storytelling in the context of scholarly awareness and integrity. As a result the essays are both accessible and appropriately researched. Chapters range from good-humored ruminations on milking cows with a mother-in-law to poignant reflections on a mother's abandonment through death by suicide, and from considering the ethics learned from a mother's meals based on the *More With Less Cookbook* to proposing that "Mennonite mothering" can include the healing work of a congregation in Bogotá, Colombia in response to those suffering from the trauma of political violence. Of special note are two chapters on being a "not-yet-mother," one an ethnographic account of the hidden pain of infertility and another on "Creative (M)othering" by a writer, pregnant with poetry.

This approach also made room for the differing personalities, styles, and expertise of the authors to shine through. The first chapter, by Magdelene Redekop, introduces an informal photo of her parents at the time of their marriage in 1932. Engaging this picture, she reflects on the philosophy of photography, memory and nostalgia, women's exercise of power in a Mennonite culture that repressed creativity, surrogate mothering, the clothing of women's bodies at weddings, and the humanity of mothers. Connie T. Braun offers poems exploring maternal subjectivity based on her experience "as a first-generation Canadian daughter and granddaughter of post-World War II Mennonite refugees from Ukraine and Poland" (85). And Cory Anderson, who joined an Amish-Mennonite Beachy Church after high school, writes a straightforward historical essay on the evangelical

orientation of mothers in his church tradition.

The editors' helpful introduction outlines earlier publications on women in Mennonite history, Mennonite literary arts, and feminist studies, noting that this collection takes seriously what previous work has uncovered: "that Mennonite women are mothers at the nexus of the personal, patriarchal communities, historical particularities, and the cultural and religious identity of Mennonites, and that they are at the heart of perpetuating and determining Mennonite identity" (7). The editors recognize, too, the limitations of the volume—lack of attention to family models within Mennonite communities that differ from traditional marriage, and the need for more work on step-mothering, adoption, and mothering across cultures. They are aware that the changing demographics of the Mennonite Church in North America and globally require additional research and a much fuller picture of Mennonite mothering than what is available in this volume.

About twice as many essays reflect on Canadian experiences of mothering as on US experiences, and most of the chapters address mothering in fairly conservative Mennonite church cultures. Although I am now 67 years old, as a young person from Swiss Mennonite background growing up in a college town in Ohio, I did not see many mothers struggling with the degree of tensions caused by church culture identified in a number of the essays.

The editors tried to note both the integral connection between culture and religion and their distinction. However, given the way various writers refer to "Mennonite culture" and ethnicity, it appears that there is not a singular culture but a wide variety of cultures, plural, within which Mennonite religious life and mothering are embedded. Like Susie Fisher Stoesz, I am less interested in the efforts of Mennonite women "in the passing on of material culture such as food-making, clothing styles, artistic talent, or their participation in church—than in tracing the central role of memory, motherhood and storytelling about Mennonite history in the shaping of Mennonite women's identities" (107). That history is not limited to European American migrant experience but includes a far richer mix of memory and motherhood.

Mothering Mennonite would be a valuable addition to congregational, college, and seminary libraries. Some of the chapters could stimulate

significant sharing by groups of women or help pastors and teachers see the relationship of culture, faith, and mothering in new ways. Certainly this volume nudges Mennonite mothers and daughters to consider more deeply the fraught-with-dangers-and-possibilities nature of this strong and vulnerable relationship.

Gayle Gerber Koontz, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana

Robert Zacharias. *Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites and Migration in Canadian Literature*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2013.

[T]hese texts are worth gathering together not because they succeed in repeating a shared past but precisely because they fail to do so. Their departures from their predecessors make it possible to talk of different texts (i.e., of *rewritings* rather than simply *replications*) and reveal the competing motives animating their reorganizations of the history that they simultaneously reflect and construct. Each retelling, each strain of the larger narrative, affirms the importance of the Mennonites' dispersal while rewriting it in significant ways. (Page 25, emphasis original)

Combining literary criticism and diaspora studies, Robert Zacharias's ambitious book looks at four Canadian Mennonite novels as "*rewritings*" of the Mennonite "break event," or conscious attempts to re-narrate the formative and traumatic Mennonite escape from Russia to Canada in the 1920s. Strikingly, as Zacharias indicates, this event has overflowed direct experiential, geographic, and generational links to become *the* determinative experience shaping Mennonite identity ("a process of imagining a community")—as well as marking "the 'birth' of Mennonite literature in Canada" (5, 11, 14). Yet, as the opening quotation suggests, the author's examination of the differences between four widely-read re-narrations interrogates the very notion of a monolithic Russian Mennonite migration experience.

Zacharias begins by comprehensively introducing the context(s) and framing the terms and concepts of his project, followed by a chapter detailing the history of and relationship between Mennonite identity and Mennonite literature. He then turns to his typology of the four novels. Al Reimer's *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* [1985] exemplifies what Zacharias terms the "theo-pedagogical narrative," depicting the recovery of Anabaptist humility before God (*Gelassenheit*) as the difficult lesson of the Russian migration experience (81-82, 85-87). Arnold Dyck's *Lost in the Steppe* [English version, 1974] reflects the "ethnic narrative" through idealizing and in a sense "*archiving*" copious details of the lost Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia, thereby painting Mennonites as a distinct, superior Germanic ethnic community (100, 124, emphasis original).

Sandra Birdsell's *The Russländer* [2001] uses a subjective, individual "trauma narrative" to question the appropriation of such experiences to serve communal attempts to determine a cohesive Mennonite history and identity (131-32). Rudy Wiebe's "polyphonic" novel, *The Blue Mountains of China* [1970], presents a "meta-narrative," tracing Mennonite migrations within Russia/Ukraine and to Canada, Paraguay, and elsewhere, thereby problematizing tendencies to reduce the Mennonite experience to a simple exodus from Russia to Canada, as in the other three novels examined (154-55, 158-59).

Zacharias's treatment of the four narrative types displays both breadth and depth, and his introductory and concluding material is equally interesting. His thoroughly interdisciplinary approach combines not only literary criticism and diaspora studies, but history, philosophy, psychology, and theology. Noting the near-exclusive focus on ethnicity (and absence of theology) within Mennonite literary criticism, he helpfully traces its rise within the context of Canadian multicultural or "minoritized literature"—a context in which "religious difference has been consistently misrecognized as representing an ethnic distinctiveness" (72, 37). His mention of Mennonite origins in the 16th-century Reformation (48) and his exploration of *Gelassenheit* in Reimer's novel (71 ff.) are commendable steps toward remedying a significant gap in Mennonite literary criticism, even as they strain the boundaries of his typology. The latter leads him, for instance, to gloss over the theology within Wiebe's novel (73, 175-76), which

arguably exemplifies the evolution of a distinctly Mennonite peace theology from *Gelassenheit*/nonresistance to more contemporary forms of active nonviolent resistance/peacemaking.

Another of Zacharias's key contributions to various Mennonite communities and academic disciplines is his nuanced complication of central aspects of Mennonite identity, including the self-designation "Russian Mennonite," which sidelines "Kanadier" Mennonites (and their literature!) and the 80 percent of Mennonites who remained in Russia, to say nothing of the non-European majority of Mennonites (38-39, 66, 49); questions of Mennonite complicity in the colonial oppression of Ukrainians and Aboriginal Canadians, Paraguayans, and others, whose lands they have occupied or continue to occupy (66, 68-69, 55); and the unacknowledged privileges of Mennonite "whiteness, education, and wealth" which, along with religion, problematize the place of Mennonite literature and criticism within multicultural Canadian literature, since "not all elsewheres are equal" (44-45, 183-84).

Zacharias mentions that Mennonite literary authors have become the most influential creator/critics of Canadian Mennonite identity. His thorough, unflinching volume proves that the insights of literary critics are likewise indispensable. I hope it will garner the attention it deserves from all corners of the Mennonite world.

Susanne Guenther Loewen, Doctoral Candidate, Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario

Alain Epp Weaver. *Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014.

Alain Epp Weaver has woven a remarkable theological treatise that forms the foundation for a vision of the future in which peoples of diverse cultures can find common ground for living together in peace and in common space. Using as his focus the tragic irony of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, he has constructed a theological scheme applicable to similar situations of

displacement and exile in the modern world.

The tragic irony is that Ashkenazi Jews, desiring to resurrect themselves from historical disappearance, persecution, and exile by founding a Jewish nation-state and therefore enabling a cartographic return to history, found it necessary to remove a whole people and their culture (including the cultures of eastern Jews) from history. The *Nakba* (Arabic for ‘catastrophe’) entailed driving Palestinians—Arab, Christian, and others—out of their historic villages and cities and into refugee status, erasing their existence from the map and forbidding any historical reference to these acts in the teaching of Israeli history. Thus, Israel created a mirror image of itself embodied in the modern Palestinian people. A practical, guiding theme in the book becomes this question: Would a return from exile by these Palestinians likewise require a rewriting of maps and the loss of Israeli cartographic presence?

To investigate this question, Weaver begins with more fundamental questions, such as the meaning of return for Palestinians. Is it a hoped-for literal return to many villages that were destroyed in the *Nakba*, or to the homes taken over in the cities by invading Jews? Or, would a symbolic return be adequate, such as the establishment of territories of return in the West Bank? Weaver reviews current attempts by Palestinians to keep alive the mappings of their former homes, producing a kind of cartographic existence in place of actual return until that return can happen.

This leads the author to investigate thoroughly the meanings of *exile* and return with detailed references from a wide variety of theological and secular discourses. He especially focuses on the writings of John Howard Yoder and his critics. This discussion comprises one of the book’s most important contributions, the development of a theology of exile. Zionism sees the reclaiming of the “land” of Israel as the redemption of the Jewish people from exile. In Zionism, exile is theologically looked at as punishment and shame, and return as redemption and restoration. But is reclamation of the land the “end of history” or goal of Jewish identity? Weaver, referencing Yoder, develops an argument that exilic existence in relationship to the land, as modeled in Jewish history, is also a stance that can counteract the identification of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism with nation-states. Thus *shalom*, including a doctrine that land is created and administered for the benefit of all peoples, is the servanthood that God teaches and is the mission

of the Church. Exilic existence is a point of view from which to critique and question political arrangements and so becomes a theology of politics too. Weaver also finds relevant to this discussion spiritual elements of exile and return: Christians as pilgrims, worldly alienation, and finding home in the bosom of God.

How this theology fits in with the question of actual ownership of the land in Palestine leads Weaver to review the activity of Jewish and Palestinian organizations that are currently striving to keep alive the historical presence of Palestinians in Israel and working for an institutionalized, long-term presence. How actual return can happen comprises the last section of the book. For Weaver, it is logical to recognize that land is a homogeneous entity and heterogeneous cultures are existing upon it. It follows that a political, shared future with no binding territorial claims would be both practical and revolutionary. The crumbling nation states of the former colonial world will transition into a future, but what that future holds is unclear, and Weaver's vision is certainly the more desirable.

Weaver, who has lived and worked in Palestine, and counts many Palestinians as friends and co-workers, seeks the justice and the return that is longing in the hearts of an exiled people. He has written *Mapping Exile and Return* for an academic audience. The lay reader will have problems sifting through the language to find the essence of meaning, but in the end it is worth the effort.

George D. Muedeking, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, California State University Stanislaus, Turlock, California.

Reta Halteman Finger and George D. McClain. *Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2013.

Creating a Scene in Corinth provides an excellent simulation of an early Christian church. The book is intended for use in a study by a small to large group (10-25 people), in either an academic or church setting. The simulation is constructed around the Corinthian church as it is evidenced in 1 Corinthians, and functions as both an introduction to the Greco-Roman setting of Corinth (and by extension of other cities in the Mediterranean during the mid-first century) and a chapter-by-chapter survey of Paul's letter.

The book is divided into two principal parts plus appendices. The first seven chapters introduce Corinth, the background to Paul's relationship with the Corinthians, and key sociological constructs such as honor-shame, slavery, patronage, and the religious world of 1st-century Corinth. Two helpful resources are supplied that deepen the introduction given in these chapters: Appendix 1 ("Arrogant Aristocrats in Actions"), which provides a short drama about the implications of emperor worship for the group to enact, and a list of eight "Supplementary Web Resources" (10, 20).

These seven chapters plus resources provide the essential set-up for the simulation. Members of the group use this material to determine which house church (Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ) they will be a member of, which character they will perform during the simulation, and what their social status, living conditions, and back-stories will be.

Chapters 8-18 provide material for the simulation proper. For the full simulation, 11 sessions cover the entire letter of 1 Corinthians, concluding with an *Agape* meal (recipes included) and worship. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to the text to be read (by someone playing the role of Phoebe or of Stephanas) during the session. These introductions are short, but provide a good survey and excellent resources for further exploration. They are adequate for a first launch into research on the texts if students use the book in an academic course.

After this introduction, each chapter prints out a central section of the text under consideration for the session. Following the text, several questions are posed for the characters to discuss in their respective house churches. Finally, another set of questions leads the group back into the 21st

century for debriefing.

Appendix 2 provides a “Leader’s Guide,” an essential resource for a fruitful performance of the simulation. Not only does it supply assistance on such matters as publicity, it gives helpful session-by-session guidance. While a full simulation requires 14 or 15 sessions, the authors also provide adaptations for simulations consisting of 10, 8, 6, 5, 2 or even 1 session. Although the simulation is a deeper, more thorough experience if carried out in full, even a single session can make a big impact—and perhaps prepare a larger group to explore a longer experience.

The book includes a bibliography and index, as well as credits for the photographs used throughout. It is an excellent introduction to, and example of, how to carry out a biblical simulation. For teachers or leaders who have never conducted one before, it gives a strong base both for the set-up and the session-by-session performance. Adaptations may be made depending on whether the simulation is performed in a church, retreat, or academic setting.

Note that co-author Reta Halteman Finger has published a previous simulation—on Paul’s letter to the Romans (*Roman House Churches for Today: A Practical Guide for Small Groups*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007]). In that simulation, instructions are given for how to handle unusually small groups of participants, and the questions are more open-ended. In *Creating a Scene in Corinth*, the character studies provided for each of house-church group are more explicitly defined. Depending on the usage of the present book and the context of the simulation, instructors might want to allow for more open-endedness, both in the character formation and in the discussion questions.

Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation is recommended for church groups and for academic courses, undergraduate or graduate. It will also be valuable for any independent and imaginative reader, whether a teacher or a student of the Pauline letters.

Virginia Wiles, Professor of New Testament, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Willard M. Swartley. *John*. The Believers Church Bible Commentary. Harrisonburg, VA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2013.

Willard Swartley has made an outstanding contribution to the Believers Church Bible Commentary series with this volume on the Gospel of John. He plumbs the depths of the complex world of Johannine scholarship and chronicles it in a clear, accessible fashion. Swartley notes in his Introduction he utilizes “the narrative method” in analyzing the Gospel (37), and this has ramifications for the shape of the resulting commentary. It means he will be attentive to narrative dynamics in the text, and he does provide brief descriptions of five of them: irony, metaphors, misunderstandings, double entendre, and symbolism (37). However, the functioning of narrative dynamics in the Gospel is not afforded major attention in the work as a whole, though irony and symbolism do receive significant coverage in isolated instances.

The decision to use the narrative method is most noticeable in the constant attention to the narrative flow of the Gospel. The author uses the “Preview” sections of each chapter to tie the chapter’s content into the narrative flow to that point, and even dedicates space in some “Explanatory Notes” sections for this purpose as well. Utilizing the narrative method also necessitates focusing just on the canonical form of the Gospel, thus bracketing out all matters of compositional history.

The author provides a solid treatment of the other interpretive issues, offering an exceptional coverage of the research. For a volume of fewer than 600 pages, this commentary presents an inordinate amount of material, owing to an innovation on the publisher’s part. The original manuscript had to be shortened by almost one-third for print publication, but the excised portions are available as a Web supplement!

Given that this book is a commentary in the Believers Church tradition, it is not surprising that Swartley gives full attention to issues related to peace and peacemaking arising out of the Johannine text. For example, he characterizes Jesus’ “Action in the Temple” (2:14-17) as a protest against the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals engaging in practices that oppressed the poor (99). He makes the astute observation that Jesus’ words in verse 16 are addressed to the sellers of doves, indicating these particular sellers were not driven out of the temple with the others; this is

significant because doves were the sacrifice of the poor (100). Swartley also notes that Jesus' actions here were consistently interpreted as nonviolent in the early centuries, with a shift to seeing them as violent beginning only with Augustine, and this text subsequently being employed to authorize the use of violence (100).

The author also exercises care to ensure readers do not see Jesus' vitriol against "the Jews" as justification for anti-Semitic sentiment. Throughout the commentary, he makes clear that the referents of this label are not Jews in general, but rather a particular group among them who were opposing Jesus, and he supplies cross-references to a lengthy treatment of this issue in the "Essays" section of the volume (520-25).

I do wish the social-scientific work on the Gospel—research into the components of Mediterranean culture (e.g. honor/shame, patronage, collectivist personality)—had been given more consideration, for it has been the source of significant interpretive insights into biblical texts. The bibliography does include works of Jerome Neyrey and John Pilch, leading proponents of this approach, but these works play only a small role in the commentary. Swartley's treatment of the Gospel would have been well served if he had utilized as a resource Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Fortress Press, 1998) a work dedicated to providing readings of the passages of John informed by the Mediterranean culture underlying the text. For example, on an attempt by "the Jews" to arrest Jesus (10:39), Swartley simply addresses how Jesus manages to escape (265), whereas the *Social-Science Commentary* points out "the Jews" were motivated by a desire to defend God's honor.

Swartley's work will appeal to pastors; he begins each chapter with an anecdote—mainly from his own life—and even offers "Sermon Starters" in some chapters. But this commentary would be a treasure for any serious students of the Bible, especially those interested in a Believers Church perspective on the Gospel of John.

Gary Yamasaki, Professor of Biblical Studies, Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, British Columbia

Valerie Weaver-Zercher. *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2013.

The Amish make up less than one-tenth of one percent of the population of the United States, yet in 2012 a new “Amish romance novel” was published every four days and a new Amish book series was launched every two weeks. Sales figures of Amish novels by authors like Beverly Lewis, Wanda Brunstetter, and Cindy Woodsmall—none of them Amish themselves—can run into the millions. Valerie Weaver-Zercher’s timely and engaging study, *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels*, is the first extended study of this remarkable literary phenomenon.

In the opening chapter, Weaver-Zercher draws on cultural studies and transactional reader theories to argue that in order to understand the “allure” of Amish fiction, we need to attend not simply to the novels themselves but also to their production, circulation, and—most important in this context—their reception. The second chapter offers a brief survey of the field, distinguishing Amish fiction from prairie and Harlequin romances, identifying Helen Reimensnyder Martin’s *Sabrina* (1905) as the original and “ur-bonnet book,” and noting a few other early precedents before positioning Beverly Lewis as the direct forerunner of the contemporary publishing boom.

What follows throughout the remaining eight chapters, in discussions with titles like “The DNA of Amish Romance Novels,” “Taking the Amish to Market,” and “Amish Reading Amish,” is a sharp and engaging examination that aims to take seriously the various competing interests driving the growth of the field.

Weaver-Zercher argues that the source of the “thrill” behind Amish romance novels is complex and conflicted, and suggests that their popularity may tell us more about their readers than about the Amish. Rather than offering close engagements with individual novels, she dips strategically into the books and a large pool of interviews with readers, authors, and publishers. Although at times this approach risks being too anecdotal to support her broad claims, it does offer a fascinating portrait of the phenomenon as a whole, enabling her to identify its overemphasis of certain aspects of Amish culture (e.g., shunning) and a concomitant dismissal or ignoring of other aspects (e.g., pacifism).

Weaver-Zercher suggests that the initial draw of such novels is that they offer “clean” entertainment, reflecting a widespread dissatisfaction with “hypermodernity” and “hypersexualization,” which she presents as two overlapping dynamics of contemporary American life to which the Amish—or at least the Amish as they are portrayed in these novels—have come to represent a welcome antithesis. At the same time, she points out that the novels can be understood as affirming their evangelical readers’ own experiences and faith trajectories, with plucky but ultimately righteous protagonists wrestling with doubts and restrictive authority figures before blooming into a more individualized—i.e., more evangelical—faith.

The Thrill of the Chaste is an eminently readable book. Although I would have liked to see Weaver-Zercher engage some of the critical discussions that surround the concerns of the study more deeply, her ability to offer a nuanced argument without slipping into academic jargon will surely be appreciated by the large non-academic audience likely to be interested in the study. Moreover, she refuses to trivialize the books themselves or to caricature their mainly female evangelical readers. Convincingly arguing that such dismissals often reflect questionable assumptions about what counts as “serious” literature and who (or what gender) its readers ought to be, she goes on to show how many of the concerns over the predictability or quality of religious fiction are assuaged by an understanding of the role of literary conventions in genre fiction, and of the function of faith-based reading more generally.

Near the end of the study, Weaver-Zercher recounts a dinner at which a family friend of hers responds to her project—a book about the people who read books about another group of people—with some bemusement. “Did I now expect someone else to write a book about the book that I was writing about the books that have been written about the Amish?” she asks herself. The question is positioned as rhetorical, but there is no need to be skeptical about the study’s future. This is a welcome text for a number of fields; we will, indeed, be writing about it for some time.

Robert Zacharias, Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario

CALL FOR PAPERS

Mennonite Systematic Theology

David Cramer's "Mennonite Systematic Theology in Retrospect and Prospect," which appeared in the Fall 2013 volume of *The Conrad Grebel Review*, has generated considerable debate about the history, the future, and even the possibility of "Mennonite Systematic Theology." The occasion of this debate serves as the impetus for further sustained reflection on what Mennonite Systematic Theology is or may be. To that end, we invite submissions of original scholarly articles, especially those constructive in orientation, on this amorphous and contested theme. Articles may address one or more of the following issues:

- the qualifier "systematic"
- the qualifier "Mennonite"
- internal coherence and diversity
- Mennonite systematic theology and the Bible (and biblical theology)
- global perspectives
- historical perspectives
- "Mennonite theology" and "Anabaptist theology"
- Mennonite theology and ecumenism and/or the wider Christian tradition
- theology and praxis or lived faith
- theology and ecclesiology or doxology

Length: 5000-7000 words. See further submission guidelines.

Deadline: April 1, 2015

Submissions will undergo a peer-review process. Address inquiries and submissions to guest editors Paul Martens (Baylor University) and Malinda Berry (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) at Paul_Martens@baylor.edu.