Contents

The Conrad Grebel Review
Vol. 40 No. 1
Winter 2022

THE CONRAD GREBEL REVIEW

Volume 40
Number 1
Winter 2022

The Conrad Grebel Review

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The Conrad Grebel Review

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Book Reviews

Foreword

This special issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review* comprises papers delivered at the ninth biennial graduate student conference staged by the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) in 2021. I am grateful to the guest editors, Gerald Ens, Benjamin Bixler, and Hyejung Jessie Yum for their work in seeing this project to fruition and, especially, for their generative and wide-ranging introduction that not only sets the papers in context but manages to weave together a confluence of themes that emerge from the papers in relation to the conference's focus on hope, despair, and lament. Dovetailing with the connection to TMTC, the book review section comprises reviews authored by those associated with TMTC in a variety of ways.

This issue also represents something of a watershed for *The Conrad Grebel Review* as we have bid a fond farewell to our long-standing Managing Editor, Stephen A. Jones, our Editor, W. Derek Suderman, and our Circulation Manager, Bekah Smoot-Enns. I offer my deep thanks to each of these folks for their years of service and want to offer a warm welcome to Mariia Smyrnova, our new circulation manager, Susanne Guenther Loewen, our new book review editor, and Rebecca Steinmann, our new copy editor.

As always, *The Conrad Grebel Review* invites submissions of articles or reflections on a wide range of topics in keeping with our mandate to advance thoughtful discussion of theology, ethics, peace, society, history, and culture from broadly-based Anabaptist/Mennonite perspectives.

Kyle Gingerich Hiebert
Editor

A Matter of Interpretation: Avoiding or Practicing Peace by Way of Hermeneutics

Gerald Ens, Benjamin Bixler, and Hyejung Jessie Yum
Guest Editors

The papers collected in this volume of the *Conrad Grebel Review* were first presented at the ninth biennial Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) graduate student conference in 2021. They represent some of the best offerings of a gathering that was rich in theological commitment, energy, and insight. Originally slated for 2020, and with our planning beginning in earnest in 2019, the conference was postponed for a year before we reluctantly conceded to an exclusively online format. The conference's call for papers asked for submissions to address topics related to "hope, despair, lament." This call for papers named "a world marked by polarization, violence, and ecological catastrophe." Living through COVID-19 added resonance to this theme. Authors conceived, developed, and delivered their papers during that challenging and prolonged time.

Each of the papers in this issue has its own arguments and refrains and stands well on its own, apart from the conference's assigned theme. At the same time, appreciating the context in which authors first delivered their papers may provide insight into the purposes, arguments, and uses of each paper.

We begin with Nathan Hershberger's examination of Anna Janz's use of Scripture in a revolutionary Anabaptist context. One might fruitfully read Hershberger as presenting possibilities for the demanding pathways of a hopeful reception and reading of Scripture that has moved via trial through and beyond shallow optimism. How might we learn, this paper asks, from Janz's embodied readings and her committed dependency on God's word as we seek to navigate the violent temptations of despair and triumphalist faith?

Chris Sundby's historical survey and analysis of Bonhoeffer's reception among Mennonite theologians in the 20th century takes on additional theological contours if we read it as addressing questions related to the different forms Christian hope may (and may not) take. Was Bonhoeffer's participation in an assassination attempt on Hitler a turn away from his

The Conrad Grebel Review 40, no. 1 (Winter 2022): 4-11.

earlier work? Does it reflect a despairing evasion of the sacrifices of Christian discipleship, or might it have been a sorrowful embrace of the demands of Christian hope and responsibility?

Benjamin Bixler argues that the Exodus narrative constitutes a revenge fantasy, borne of unprocessed trauma. The essay not only offers hermeneutical challenges to those who inherit Exodus as canon, but also offers a more implicit challenge to those who seek to rely on God for their strength: how might we expunge fantasy from hope and revenge from justice? Bixler's argument impels us to work towards ways of living that would allow us to address and heal from the traumas we suffer and inflict upon others, perhaps by finding hope in acknowledging and sharing our pain.

This issue concludes with Eliana Ah Rum Ku's call to preachers to make use of the rich lament literature in the Bible. She accounts for the work of lament by way of an examination of the decades-long healing process of so-called "comfort women" who were sexually exploited by the Japanese army during its occupation of the Korean peninsula. Instead of trying to give explanations or premature hope, Ku counsels preachers to cultivate communities of empathetic solidarity with those in pain by using lament to "create a space for sorrow, allow the sorrow to be heard, and let listeners meet the listening and lamenting God who goes to the cross to respond to human suffering."

Two additional themes unite these four papers in ways that intersect with the conference theme. That is, each paper engages in and comments upon the task of *hermeneutics*, and does so with a particular focus on *violence*, asking how we might identify, respond to, and navigate the violences of the world.

Hershberger's paper locates itself in the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster, the focus of many Anabaptist reflections on violence, and follows Janz's shifting and bodily engaged interpretative practices and uses of Scripture as she moved from violent revolutionary to a practitioner of nonviolent hope. Yet Hershberger acknowledges that this interpretation of Janz's life, faith, and commitment to nonviolence remains an uncertain matter, open to interpretation. Central to Sundby's essay is this question: how might one read Bonhoeffer (and especially, how might Mennonites read Bonhoeffer) given his willingness to make use of violence at the end of

his life? Bixler consciously wrestles with violence in the Exodus narrative, working to identify and disavow it; further, he consciously draws on those voices most overtly subject to violence in contemporary times to guide his interpretation and describes the very product of Exodus as a relic of ancient Israel's own reading of the violence it suffered. Ku's paper not only uses the testimony of women who suffered horrifying violence in order to identify, understand, and utilize the theme of lament in Scripture; she also describes the healing journey of Korean "comfort women" as, in part, an interpretive work of learning to name and describe as violence the violence to which they were subject.

The confluence of themes in these papers invites the possibility that, at least when it comes to matters of hope, despair, and lament, there is something about the work of interpretation vis-à-vis violence that is particularly arresting for this generation of Mennonite scholars. In one respect, the prominence of these themes simply reflects an ongoing concern. It is not new for Mennonites to give accounts of peace and nonviolence and their importance to Mennonite convictions or to articulate and emphasize the particular hermeneutic methods and practices that sustain and promote a minority way of faith. But might we make anything more of this?

I, Gerald, am reading C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* to my son, and I recently had occasion to re-read the High King Peter's challenge to a battle of single combat that he issues to the evil usurper Miraz in *Prince Caspian*:

> It is our pleasure to adventure our royal person on behalf of our trusty and well-beloved Caspian in clean wager of battle to prove upon your Lordship's body that…your Lordship [is] twice guilty of treachery both in withholding the dominion of Narnia from the said Caspian and in the most abhominable - don't forget to spell it with an H, Doctor - bloody, and unnatural murder of your kindly lord and brother… Wherefore we most heartily provoke, challenge, and defy your Lordship to the said combat and monomachy (177).

Reading these words, I found myself longing for the moral clarity and opportunity of Peter's situation. Just once, I thought, I would like a chance to take such a stand, to so straightforwardly defy the violence of the world and

to have such a clear and dramatic course of action available to me. We use this individual anecdote because we all find that, while we are fortunate to know many good people, we do not find it easy to name villains or heroes; indeed, the endless decisions of each day typically appear shrouded in enervating ambiguity, each day's work as much a capitulation to the world's violence and drudgery as a participation in God's goodness.

We wonder whether the prominence of violence and hermeneutics in the papers gathered in this special issue reflects something about these sorts of convictions and challenges. It appears that the Mennonite graduate students and emerging scholars at this conference gladly inherit and embrace the hope passed on to us that abounds from Christ's gospel of peace, looking to take it up in our scholarship and our lives (though this is, we are constantly aware, a dangerous matter of interpretation). We are deeply concerned with violence, for we wish to defy and abstain from it, in accordance with what we have received and been taught.

At the same time, we often find doing so fraught, confusing, and open-ended in ways that we have been unprepared for. Whether or not the world really is more complicated or even whether this sensibility en masse is in fact novel, is (of course, we know) up to interpretation. The speculation we are testing is that these papers reflect the sense that our struggle is not against evil, at least not initially; we struggle instead to first discern or read both the violence around and within us *and* accordant modes of action, hoping desperately that there may be others who see things the same way we do and with whom we may act in concert. This yearning for concrete work to do with others stands in tension with the sense that we as academics must continually interpret and reconsider.

In all of these papers, the benefit of hindsight and historical perspective allows us to clearly name the evil that must be resisted. The challenge lies in identifying evil in our own times and responding in ways that faithfully reflect our convictions as Anabaptists in the moment. What are the hermeneutical and interpretive strategies that allow us to reflect the love of Jesus, name contemporary evils in our world, and address the violence around us? What biblical, theological, and cultural voices will we listen to in order to inform our hermeneutics?

Much of our academic work is marked by endless deferment of action,

at its worst a temptation to escape action via confusion and obscurity. We too often forget to look to scripture for strength but fixate on hermeneutics and can end up with more questions than answers. At its best though, and we think the papers gathered here reflect this, the work of hermeneutics and interpretation can be an involvement in proclaiming the gospel, the good news for the oppressed (Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16-21). It can be a mode of working towards a better insight with the many communities we inhabit. Such work can take the form of moving through despair and lament into hope for a more peaceable coming together, until that time, as Hershberger prays at the end of his paper, "all these fragments will be gathered up."

Lastly, we want to reflect the conference that produced these papers and the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre which supported this and previous graduate student conferences. In light of the closure of the TMTC, and the reality that the conference that produced the papers in this issue may well be the last such conference, we offer our reflections on the influence of both the Centre and the conference on each of us. The TMTC conference in particular has been a place where we have found the best of academia: support, collegiality, and stimulation.

Jessie's Personal Reflections

Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) has been an anchor of my academic journey as a Mennonite graduate student. From the first welcoming event during my doctoral program, my active participation in various gatherings and fellowships at TMTC has greatly facilitated my growth as a Mennonite scholar.

Among the memorable experiences, two graduate conferences hold a special place in my heart. In 2018, I attended the conference as a participant. As someone who did not attend Mennonite schools during my formal education, this conference in Toronto was my first academic gathering with fellow Mennonite colleagues. Years later, in 2021, I had the privilege of joining the committee for the conference. Collaborating with Kyle, the director of TMTC, as well as Ben and Gerald, was a rewarding experience. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, I was grateful that it ultimately provided the opportunity for diverse participants from Kenya, Europe, and North America to join the conference online. These conferences served as

wonderful avenues for fellowship, networking, and engaging in meaningful discussions among Mennonite graduate students.

While I am saddened by the closure of TMTC, I hope that Mennonite graduate students from various locations will continue to have opportunities for fellowship and academic interactions in other settings.

Benjamin's Personal Reflections

I have presented at three different TMTC conferences: 2016 (Power in Perspective); 2018 (Texts, Experiences, Interpretation); and 2021 (Hope, Despair, Lament). Reflecting on the value of these conferences, I see how I was encouraged in my work as an Anabaptist PhD student. In 2016, I presented my first ever conference paper, about to enter a PhD program that fall. The conference provided a space of collegiality and support in which I could begin my academic journey. While studying at a Methodist school with no other Anabaptist students in 2018, connecting with TMTC's academic community and engaging with other Anabaptists wrestling with some of the same questions I had validated those questions. Helping to plan the 2021 conference enabled me to build relationships with other scholars that will endure into the future.

These conferences also affirmed my pursuit of studying biblical studies. Simply put, I felt a bit out of place not studying theology or ethics at these conferences. Because there were few other Anabaptist students (at least among those attending) who were pursuing biblical studies, I saw the need for Anabaptists to be working in this area; this was a confirmation of the work to which I felt called.

I lament the closing of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre yet remain hopeful that these types of gatherings can continue to happen in some format. The future of higher education generally, and Mennonite higher education particularly, feels tenuous at this moment in time. The support that these conferences provide, especially for those of us studying on our own, will be important for developing the next generation of Anabaptist theological scholars.

Gerald's Personal Reflections

My first TMTC conference was also the first summer of my MA program.

I had gotten wind of the conference through various promotional channels in the fall, right as I began graduate studies. Seeing it for the opportunity it was (a welcoming setting designed to provide opportunity to Mennonite graduate students), I was immediately determined to apply. I would need that determination in the coming months as I battled a bundle of nerves to craft a proposal, anxiously proofread it for typos, and then spent an entire morning summoning my gumption to finally hit "send" and formally submit it. It is hard for me to see how I would have been able to subsequently apply for more intimidating conferences and submit my writings for publication without this initial soft entry point.

That first conference itself was a blur of stimulation, engagement, and excitement. I was coming from a secular, Religious Studies university department. As a result, for me perhaps most important were the stakes present in the theological and ecclesial arguments and discussions people made at the conference. It wasn't just that the topics we covered mattered and that people there were personally invested in them; even more than this, the sensibility was that the ideas on display mattered and would have an impact on the concrete communities and churches we were part of. As a result, the formal and informal settings of the conference not only made for stimulating and illuminating scholarly conversation, they reminded me of the stakes and the home of my own scholarship. I left the conference with new ideas, new relationships, fresh motivation, and a renewed sense of grounding.

The two conferences I attended after this first one continued to be important, even if they were less exciting and influential for me personally. Amazing people and scholars come to these conferences, and each TMTC conference I've been to has had a remarkable breadth and quality of scholarship on display (which, I've learned, you cannot take for granted). As such, as I grew in scholarly experience and confidence, the conference proved an environment for testing out new ideas. A place that was so welcoming and also contained the capacity for incisive criticism helped me to determine which of my own ideas I should discard and which I should pursue and develop. Finally, I'm tremendously grateful for the opportunity to have had a hand in planning and administering this most recent conference. It was a valuable opportunity (one I would not have had elsewhere) to work with committed people, gain experience, and to help support an institution that

has meant so much to me.

It is because of TMTC that I know and am connected to numerous other Mennonite scholars. It is because of TMTC that I've had the opportunity to present and develop my work in an ecclesial context (I initially wrote and delivered my first peer reviewed publication for a TMTC Scholars Forum, and there received the encouragement to try to publish it – thanks Kyle!). It is thanks to TMTC that I was able to take my first small step into the world of writing book reviews. And in less tangible ways the work and events of TMTC, I believe, helped to turn the conversations I had with my Mennonite colleagues more often towards church and a theology rooted in ecclesiology.

We offer these reflections not only as our own interpretations or hermeneutical responses to what we have experienced, but also as a call to action. It is our hope that someone (or some institution) will take the initiative to find a way forward in supporting and drawing together Anabaptist graduate students, encouraging future generations of scholars, and taking an interest in their development. We believe that the papers that follow are a testament to the type of work that results from making an investment in those beginning their journey into the academy. As you read these papers, may you be encouraged and hopeful for the type of work that graduate students are pursuing, and may you also be called to respond.

Gerald Ens is a PhD candidate at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Benjamin Bixler is a PhD candidate at Drew Theological School and teaches at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Hyejung Jessie Yum is a PhD candidate at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto in Toronto, Ontario.

The Wounds of Hope: Scriptural Apocalypticism and the Wisdom of Anna Jansz

Nathan Hershberger

Abstract

Through an examination of scriptural apocalypticism in the life of the Anabaptist martyr Anna Jantz, the author explores the painful gap between divine promise and human reality. Furthermore, the author suggests that tending to this gap, which involves an examination of the entanglement of Jantz's wounds with the wounds of scripture, has the potential to lead human readers to develop the practical wisdom necessary to voice scripture and remember the martyrs well.

During its brief existence between 1534 and 1535, the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster minted coins bearing the phrase "The Word became flesh."[1] Here at Münster, the coins declared, God's reign had finally arrived and would envelop the whole earth, transforming corruption and injustice into peace. It is a bitter and ironic motto: "The Word became flesh"—as the city authorities expelled or executed those who refused rebaptism; "The Word became flesh"—as they forced women into marriages they did not choose. On human lips the deepest truths of scripture may become lies. The Word indeed became flesh, but not at Münster.

How may Anabaptists remember failures like Münster well? And more broadly, when Christians claim scripture's promises, how can they avoid ending in similar failure? This second question is at the heart not of

[1] It is not clear whether these coins circulated within the city—since all property had been confiscated—or only outside it. For a brief description and picture, see Hermann von Kerssenbroch, *Narrative of the Anabaptist Madness* trans. Christopher S. Mackay (Leiden, Brill, 2007), 70-71. For an overview, see Victor G. Wiebe, "Anabaptist Coinage and Commemorative Medals," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. September 2015. See also Marion Kobelt-Groch, trans. Linda Huebert-Hecht, "Hille Feicken of Sneek" in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: 16th Century Reforming Pioneers,* ed. C. Arnold Snyder and Linda Huebert Hecht (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 291.

The Conrad Grebel Review 40, no. 1 (Winter 2022): 12-35.

particular Anabaptist difficulties, but of the broader Christian struggle to live faithfully with scripture. At Münster, a gap loomed wide between scripture enlivened by the Spirit and scripture voiced by vicious caprice. But, as I detail in this essay, such a gap exists not only in apocalyptic movements like Münster but also in the everyday encounters of Christians with scripture. When scripture seems to promise its readers something that then fails to come about, it creates a painful dissonance. Such failure cannot be reduced merely to interpretive misapprehension of scriptural truth. Rather, it names a pain at the heart of scripture itself, that is, the gap between divine promise and present reality.

How then may the promises of scripture be voiced well? In pursuit of what James McClendon called "biography as theology,"[2] this paper frames this theological and exegetical question through an examination of the scriptural apocalypticism of a single life, that of Anna Jansz—an Anabaptist martyr on the fringes of the Münster movement. By attending to the life of an individual, I do not seek to reduce hermeneutics to biography, but rather to show how both interpretive difficulties and their solutions are inseparable from embodied context. First, I contextualize Jansz in relation to Münsterite Anabaptism. Next, I detail Jansz's life and brief writings, including her early apocalyptic "Trumpet Song," a letter to the charismatic leader David Joris and her final *Testament*. I move finally to the entanglement of Jansz's wounds with scripture's "wounds."[3]

Jansz's life displays with clarity the difficulty of speaking scripture's promises well. Jansz initially weaves apocalyptic hope out of the words of scripture. When these hopes fail, she voices her sorrow using these same words and articulates a different hope that must take the form of patient

[2] "The only relevant critical examination of Christian belief may be one that begins by attending to lived lives. Theology must be at least biography." James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1974), 22. See also the final chapter of Alasdair MacIntyre's *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* for an example of this mode of reflection in a philosophical key, and Willie Jennings' biographical approach in *The Christian Imagination*. Such approaches do not reduce theology to narrative, but rather point to the embodied and incarnational reality of theological reflection.

[3] I use the analogy of scripture's "wounds" to denote painful passages or passages that contradict other passages or personal experience. Though necessarily imprecise, this analogy provides a way of understanding individual and conceptual textual difficulties—on the model of the wounds of Christ—as both profoundly traumatic and potentially transformative.

endurance. She can do this because she finds in scripture the same wounds she has suffered. Scripture becomes not only the language through which she finds herself wounded by a loss of hope, but also that which names that loss and offers it as prayer. Voicing scripture's promises wisely required Anna Jansz to tend scripture's wounds, along with her own.

Jansz's life and writings suggest that no universal interpretive procedure can heal these wounds. The pain of scriptural apocalypticism cannot be entirely evaded, for it names the heart of Christian hope. Instead, tending the painful gap between divine promise and human reality can, with difficulty, lead human readers to develop the practical wisdom that allows them to voice scripture—and remember the martyrs—well. Under the discipline of hope, this pain may be an opportunity for growth, however halting, in wisdom.

Apocalypticism, Gender, and the Münster Movement

For nearly five hundred years, three cages have hung from the spire of St. Lambert's Church in Münster, Germany. At first, they held the rotting remains of three leaders of the Anabaptist revolution[4] crushed there in 1535. Yet even after these were removed decades later, the city authorities left the cages up as a warning and have refurbished them every few centuries—most recently, in a subtle recontextualization, setting a lightbulb in each cage in memory of the dead Anabaptists. The cages suggest that the rebellion at Münster was an aberration, an isolated occurrence that can be laid at the feet of those who occupied them, something outside the normal flow of history.[5] This is how historians of apocalypticism have tended to treat Münster.[6] Until

[4] Though "revolution" may be anachronistic, Ralf Klötzer makes an effective case that it most aptly describes what took place in Münster. Ralf Klötzer, "The Melchiorites and Münster," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism: 1521-1700,* ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 219.

[5] For a historiographical reflection on this, see Michael Driedger, "Thinking inside the Cages: Norman Cohn, Anabaptist Münster, and Polemically Inspired Assumptions about Apocalyptic Violence," *Nova Religio* 21, no. 4 (2018): 38-62.

[6] For Christopher Rowland, Münster was "the best example of the intertwining of the Apocalypse and violence in Christian history." "Apocalypse and Violence: The Evidence from the Reception History of the Book of Revelation," in *Apocalypse and Violence*, ed. Abbas Amanat and John J. Collins (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 2004), 4. See also Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians*

recently, so too have most Anabaptist chroniclers, eager to excise Münster from the body of true Anabaptists.[7] Münster has become a shorthand for what goes wrong when apocalyptic faith and political power come together.

But Anabaptists were hardly unique in their attempts to discern the imminent movement of God's judgment. Apocalyptic expectation abounded in 16th century Europe, particularly among the reformers. Many of Luther's followers called him a "second Elijah." Philip Melanchthon was the most enthusiastic of these, though surprisingly the outsider Ulrich Zwingli was the first, in 1520, to give him the designation.[8] Luther himself was consistently convinced that the Last Days were at hand—though he advised against positing specific dates.[9] Moreover, his characterization of the papacy as Antichrist resonates with the language that Münsterites like Bernhard Rothmann would use of the ruling powers—Protestant and Catholic—who were their enemies. Even the Roman Catholic church, which tended to be less hospitable to millenarian and apocalyptic thought, saw enough evidence in its midst to prompt the Fifth Lateran Council to forbid preaching on the imminence of the arrival of the Antichrist.[10] The revolution at Münster would be an outlier, then, but not unique in its use of apocalyptic imagery.

That revolution emerged organically out of a marriage between Anabaptist charismatic and apocalyptic tendencies and the practical necessities of Münster's civic reformation. Tensions between the town's economic, religious, and political leaders and newly appointed Prince,

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and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[7] In the early pages of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* the Mennonite historian John Horsch wrote that it was "permissible to use the designation 'Anabaptist movement' with reference to the evangelical Anabaptists only, leaving out of consideration the corrupt sects and other Anabaptist sects which had only a short history"—not daring to speak the name "Münster." John Horsch, "Is Dr. Kuehler's Conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound?" *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 7, no. 1 (January 1933), 52. James Stayer has led a critical reappraisal, along with Michael Driedger and Willem De Bakker.

[8] Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine, and Death in Reformation Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24.

[9] In a 1522 sermon, he wrote, "the Last Day is not farr off [*sic*]" while in 1546, just before his death, he wrote of himself and the reforming movement as "the last trumpet" to come before the return of Christ. Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,* 26.

[10] Ibid., 1.

Bishop Franz von Waldeck, overlord of Münster, grew throughout the early 1530s. Indeed, violent conflict began before the introduction of Anabaptism in the city. Guild authorities had protested the tax-free status of monasteries that operated growing textile manufactories.[11] This conflict fed a growing anticlericalism that ignited around the authorization of preachers in the city's parish churches. Waldeck was himself quite sympathetic to Lutheranism. But in 1532 the town council authorized Protestant ministers to preach in the city's churches and, fearing a loss of control, Waldeck initiated an economic blockade of the city and confiscated a large herd of cattle.[12] The town militia carried out a surprise counterattack and further violence was only averted through the intervention of the neighboring Lutheran Landgrave Philip of Hesse who brokered a treaty in early 1533 by which the town could appoint its own ministers to parish churches, but not cathedrals and monasteries.[13]

From this point the reformation in Münster might have proceeded much as it did elsewhere in northern Germany, with the city authorities coming to further accommodations with Waldeck, and perhaps Waldeck's own conversion to Lutheranism. It was not to be. The chief reformer in the city, Bernhard Rothmann, was not inclined to Lutheranism, despite its dominance in the surrounding areas. Rothmann's embrace of adult baptism, combined with support from town notables, brought on several crises that eventually led to Anabaptists winning city council elections on February 23, 1534, amid a mood of increasing apocalypticism. Jan Matthys, a prophet and follower of the Anabaptist leader Melchior Hoffmann, proclaimed that Münster was the New Jerusalem and immigrated to the city, urging his followers to do the same. The city's overlord had by then besieged the city and would do so for the next year until it fell on June 23, 1535. During that time, the prophet Jan Matthys assumed control of the city and died in a suicidal raid outside the walls after a failed prediction of Christ's return. Jan van Leiden, a Dutch tailor, took over his charismatic authority in the ensuing power vacuum and declared himself king. Even before Jan van Leiden took power, the city authorities had begun enacting wartime

[11] Klötzer, "The Melchiorites and Münster," 224. My narration of the siege relies principally on this summary.
[12] Ibid., 226.
[13] Ibid.

measures designed both to maintain social control and turn Münster into a model of biblical community. The most notorious of these measures were the forced collectivization of private property and the enactment of polygamy, a measure which made marriage compulsory for unmarried women. These measures would become infamous when the besieging forces retook the city.

Anabaptism was formed by the memory of Münster. Or, rather, the Anabaptism that would come to be defined by pacifism took shape most definitively in its aftermath, as rival Anabaptist groups tried to make sense of the failed revolution and articulate an alternative vision around which to cohere. From the beginning of Anabaptism, nonviolence was a key principle for some, but in the long aftermath of Münster, it established a much firmer hold on the movement as Anabaptists distinguished themselves from what had taken place in the city—a process led in the Netherlands by Menno Simons. Thus the Anabaptism that matured through the later 16th century in the Netherlands came to bear his name. These were not Münsterites, but *Mennonites*.

This transition also heralded a shift in the gendered realities of Anabaptism. The instabilities of the early charismatic and visionary strains of Anabaptism had allowed for a relatively high level of women's involvement in positions of power. At the head of Melchior Hoffman's charismatic movement in Strasbourg in the 1520s and 1530s, for example, there were eighteen male "visionaries" and eight female.[14] After Hoffman's death, when a rival Anabaptist leader named David Joris (with whom Anna Jansz would have a pivotal relationship) sought to assimilate the Strasbourg group into his own, it was a woman, Barbara Rebstock, who led the group's rejection of Joris's leadership.[15] As Sigrun Haude summarizes, women visionaries "were in a position to experience more freedom" through their direct connection to God, but, she qualifies, "this position was always held in check by men's claims to hold the sole keys to the mysteries of the faith."[16] Anabaptism thus seems to confirm Max Weber's "early-late" model of gender and

[14] Sigrun Haude, "Gender Roles and Perspectives Among Anabaptists and Spiritualist Groups," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism 1521-1700,* ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 434.
[15] Ibid., 435.
[16] Ibid., 436.

organization; women's leadership declined as the process of organizational formalization routinized male authority and closed off the possibility of pneumatic expressions outside traditional gender restrictions. And yet, the climactic event of charismatic and apocalyptic Anabaptism—the revolution at Münster—would itself be profoundly misogynistic, complicating any simple story of early and late women's participation.

As a hymnodist, charismatic, and martyr, Anna Jansz's life would demonstrate the possibilities and limits of women's participation in early Anabaptism. In the same way, her life speaks also to the possibilities and limits of hope for broader social and political transformation in early Anabaptism. After all, what ended as a horrific cult of personality in Münster had begun as a popular reform movement with roots in real grievances against the social, economic, and religious order. Jansz's own hope, disappointment, and patience emerge against this backdrop.

Anna Jansz: A Life in Three Moments

Anna Jansz was born around 1510 in the Netherlands and drowned in 1539 for being rebaptized. She surfaces in the written historical record at three moments, several years apart: first as a revolutionary hymnodist around 1534, then as a fervent if disappointed prophet's aide in 1536, and finally as a reformed but resolute martyr in 1538.

Jansz was born into a family of means in Briel, the Netherlands. In early 1534 when she was 22 or 23, an Anabaptist named Meynaart van Emden rebaptized her along with her husband, Arent.[17] Van Emden had close ties to the Anabaptists who were at that moment coming to power in Münster, assisting them by inciting Anabaptist uprisings in Amsterdam. Because of this, Amsterdam city authorities imprisoned him just after he baptized Jansz and her husband.[18] Whatever else her rebaptism meant to her, it must have included some anticipation of a radical reordering of the society, given the identity of her baptizer and the timing of her baptism.

The "Trumpet Song" of Anna Jansz, written around 1534, expresses

[17] Werner Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam" in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: 16th Century Reforming Pioneers,* ed. C. Arnold Snyder and Linda Huebert Hecht (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 337. Packull's is the best biographical account of Jansz.
[18] Ibid., 337.

these apocalyptic themes. The song came to be an anthem of the revolutionary Anabaptism that was cresting just then in Münster.[19] Scripture suffuses the language of the song. Indeed, it is in essence a verbal collage of scriptural texts. In the current modern edition, editors list 30 scriptural references or quotations, mostly from the book of Revelation, Ezekiel, the Gospels, and the Apocrypha. Images of harvest, feasting, and destruction combine into a description of the judgment God will bring to the earth.

Over the course of thirteen verses she extols this coming divine judgment on the rich and corrupt. "I hear the trumpet sounding," she announces in the first stanza.[20] For "Zion, God's special chosen," the trumpet announces the wedding feast of the Lamb, to which they must hurry "before you with Babylon together are slain." "Conclude the list of the transfigured!" Jansz implores Zion, for their "number will soon be complete." The middle stanzas of the song describe the coming judgment. "The dragon has come upon the earth….But be of good cheer and doubt ye not! / Our Guide will soon come to judge" (6). Now the wedding feast seems to be taking place inside a city, for Jansz enjoins her listeners—the "watchers on the gates of Zion"—to enter the city with haste. "The Keeper goes to close the gates, And you will be left outside, excluded" (8). A wave of destruction sweeps the countryside—though who is performing it remains vague. Speaking to the authorities, she promises that "Death now comes riding on horseback." If until now the gathering of the elect has been a peaceful affair, Jansz here sees rivers of blood, a "feast for carrion birds" who will "feed on the flesh of the rulers."

> The time has now come to reap,
> For evil has gained the upper hand.

[19] A Dutch historian has called it the "Marseillaise" of Dutch Anabaptism. A.F. Mellink, *De Wederdopers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1531-1544* (Gronigen: J.B. Wolters, 1954), 225-26. Quoted in C. Arnold Snyder and Linda Huebert Hecht, *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth Century Reforming Pioneers* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 336.

[20] Anna Jansz, "Trumpet Song," in *Elisabeth's Manly Courage*: *Testimonials and Songs of Martyred Anabaptist Women in the Low Countries,* ed. and trans. by Hermina Joldersma and Louis Grijp (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2000), 59. All other quotations from Jansz's "Trumpet Song" are taken from here and will be cited parenthetically by stanza.

There's hardly a space for the sowing,
For weeds have engulfed the entire Land….
Whet your scythes, the Harvest is ripe! (10)

In the final three stanzas she delights more in the coming vengeance, but the agency of the chosen people diminishes. It is not the elect, but God who will prepare this feast of blood.

The Lord will come to repay,
To avenge the blood of us all.
His wrath is descending,
We await the bowls of final wrath,
O bride, go out to meet your bridegroom! (12)

Perhaps the elect may participate in this bloodbath, but the agency is God's. The elect "rejoice," "play," "witness," "await," and "meet." "Your King is coming to set you free" she concludes, "His reward he brings before him, for all to see" (13).

What will the elect do in the coming bloodbath? Does Jansz specifically have in mind those who are defending Anabaptist Münster with arms? The song leaves an ambiguous impression. The injunction to "whet your scythes" is more than a little suggestive. But when the battle comes at the end of the song, the Lord fights it. It could, I imagine, be sung by a firmly committed pacifist eager for the Lord to wreak the vengeance she foregoes.[21] And it could be sung also by a revolutionary standing on the walls of Münster, a "watcher on the gates of Zion," with halberd in hand.

Whatever its implications for the violence of the elect, in this confident song Jansz weaves together the words and images of scripture to voice the expectations and desires of thousands of Dutch Anabaptists and radicals. They hoped that God would deliver them from the persecutions and corruption of the ruling classes of the Holy Roman Empire and all its principalities. These hopes, and perhaps the words of this very song, buoyed

[21] This is Timothy Nyhof's interpretation in "The Elusive Image of the Martyr Anneke Janszdr. of Rotterdam," *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 30-39.

up not only those who flocked to Münster, but Anabaptists who, like Anna, stayed in their homes. These expectations were crushed when Münster descended into madness and the besieging army broke through its walls.

The second of these textual moments is a letter to the Anabaptist leader David Joris a few years later. It evinces a different, more individualized form of apocalyptic anticipation. Sometime in the aftermath of the fall of Münster, Anna Jansz began a close friendship with David Joris. Joris was a former glass blower from Delft who became, between the fall of Münster in 1535 and the rise of Menno Simons several years later, the chief Anabaptist figure in the Netherlands.

The two had a formative influence on each other. They were, according to Joris's autobiography, in love. By this time, Jansz's husband Arent had probably fled to England because of persecution. In 1536, David Joris stayed at the home of someone who, while unnamed, was almost certainly Anna Jansz.[22] This prompted a crisis in her marriage when Arent Jansz returned and accused her of infidelity, a charge strenuously denied by David Joris and Anna Jansz.[23] Whatever the circumstances, the relationship left a lasting impression on both. Historian Gary Waite suggests that Anna, "who scholars assume to be the inspiration for [Joris's] later visions," was also initially "the catalyst for his aspirations to prophetic status."[24] David Joris's biography notes that "while [at Anna's home] he received much understanding from the scriptures, and divine dreams."[25]

One of Jansz's letters to Joris is extent, probably authored around 1536.[26] In it, Jansz affirms the coming judgment of God once again, but it is a more distant judgment, and one more focused on David Joris as a divine

[22] "The facts of the case fit Anna Jansz." Werner Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam," in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women,* 338.

[23] "God is a witness that he had remained as pure from her, and she from him, as the smallest infant upon the earth." "The Anonymous Biography of David Joris," in *The Anabaptist Writings of David Joris: 1535-1543,* ed. Gary Waite (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 52.

[24] Gary Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism: 1524-1543* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 68.

[25] "The Anonymous Biography of David Joris," in *The Anabaptist Writings of David Joris,* 51.

[26] The letter appears in the van Bracht, *Martelaers Spiegel* (1685 edition) but is not included in English translations of the *Martyrs Mirror.* Packull translates it and includes it as an appendix at the end of "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam," in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women,* 343-4. All subsequent quotes from the letter are from these two pages.

instrument. She opens the letter with a celebration of divine sovereignty (quoting from 2 Esdras 8:20-28) and then blesses Joris for his work. "Be the winnow in the hand of the Lord; prepare an acceptable people" she writes, drawing once more on the images of harvest she had invoked in her "Trumpet Song." Her praise and blessing draws Joris into the position that the coming divine judgment occupied in her earlier song.

> Mighty leader of Israel, beloved of the Lord, look diligently after the Lord's vineyard…He has made you a watchman in His house, a shepherd for His flock. …As the rain refreshes the earth and the dew the flowers of the field and makes their scent sweet to man, so do your warnings, teachings and instructions bring also refreshment and nourishment.

Whereas before the harvest had been the work of God, and perhaps aided by the whetted scythes of the elect, now Jansz assigns the same images of pruning and shepherding to Joris. In the second half of the letter, Jansz longs for the day of judgment. As in her hymn, that day is imminent. "I delight that the cross is revealed and the conflict begins." But here in this letter the judgment seems more drawn out and manifested initially as suffering rather than vindication. "I hope that the Lord will answer my prayer and deliver me from this earthly tabernacle… Apparently I am not yet acceptable and pure enough."

In this episode with David Joris, Jansz reveals that her apocalyptic hopes are not dead, but have been transmuted into expectation of another kind of transformation, though one much less clearly defined in terms of political and social change. The judgment is imminent, but it is by no means clear that this judgment will wreak vengeance on "the rulers," as in her "Trumpet Song." Her work in the meantime is to become worthy of the suffering that is coming. It would find her quickly.

A hymn betrayed her. Jansz, her infant son, and a female companion returned from England to Rotterdam in 1538. (Her husband Arent was possibly killed in the wave of persecution begun by Thomas Cromwell in early October of 1538.)[27] She and her female companion were singing a song that other travelers recognized as Anabaptist—perhaps her own "Trumpet

[27] Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam," 339.

Song"—and turned them in.[28] The authorities in Rotterdam imprisoned her for a few months, convicted her of having been rebaptized, and drowned her outside Rotterdam on January 24, 1539.

This final moment is stretched out and rendered legible in Anna Jansz's *Testament,* her final letter to her infant son, Isaiah, and now a part of the *Martyrs Mirror*. In it, she shifts from hopes for imminent transformation to something like tired endurance. Like in her "Trumpet Song," Jansz's words here are infused with scriptural quotations and allusions. She revisits the same scriptures but means them now quite differently.

The first part of the letter is her description and endorsement of the way of the cross to which God calls the elect. "I go today the way of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and drink of the cup of which they all have drank."[29] In her narration of this path of suffering, her wounds are voiced with those of martyrs past. She joins her complaint to God with the saints in Revelation 6:10: "'Lord Almighty God, when wilt Thou avenge the blood that has been shed?'" She still desires the vengeance she had sung about in her "Trumpet Song." But her *Testament* clarifies what had been before ambiguous: vengeance belongs only to God, and it will not be soon in coming. Only after the martyrs have completed "the number and fulfillment of Zion, the bride of the Lamb," will the New Jerusalem come "down out of heaven." This notion—the fulfillment of the number of the elect—had in her hymn indicated a short time period after which vengeance would come. But in the *Testament*, the way of the cross is the model of Christian life for as far ahead as can be imagined. To live as a Christian is to suffer persecution, loneliness, and death while dealing out love in return. She urges her son to "receive the chastisement and instruction of the Lord…for he accepts or receives no son whom he does not chasten." The apocalypse is here already, it seems, but the judgment it reveals falls most heavily on God's beloved. In her earlier hymn she had also spoken of a narrow way full of suffering. There, traversing it seemed temporary. Here it is the only path to life, and an interminable one.

If this final moment is defined textually by her *Testament,* visually it

[28] Ibid., 341.

[29] Thieleman Jans van Braght, *The Martyrs Mirror,* trans. Joseph Sohm (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1949), 453. All quotations from the *Testament* will be from this or the following page.

has been memorialized by a print in the 1685 second edition of the *Martyrs Mirror.* In that image (Figure 1) Anna Jansz petitions the crowd to take and raise her infant son after her death. The crowd, the notables, and the guards all look on as Anna Jansz, perfectly upright in the middle of the frame, holds out her son and a purse to a stooped baker. Those who will kill her seem off-balance and hesitant. Her guard is bent slightly, waiting behind her. In light of her *Testament*'s calm embrace of the consequences of her faith, it is not too hagiographic, I think, to suggest that here she is most fully in possession of herself. Here at her death she puts on display a form of moral agency that has been born of her struggle with and through scripture since her baptism.

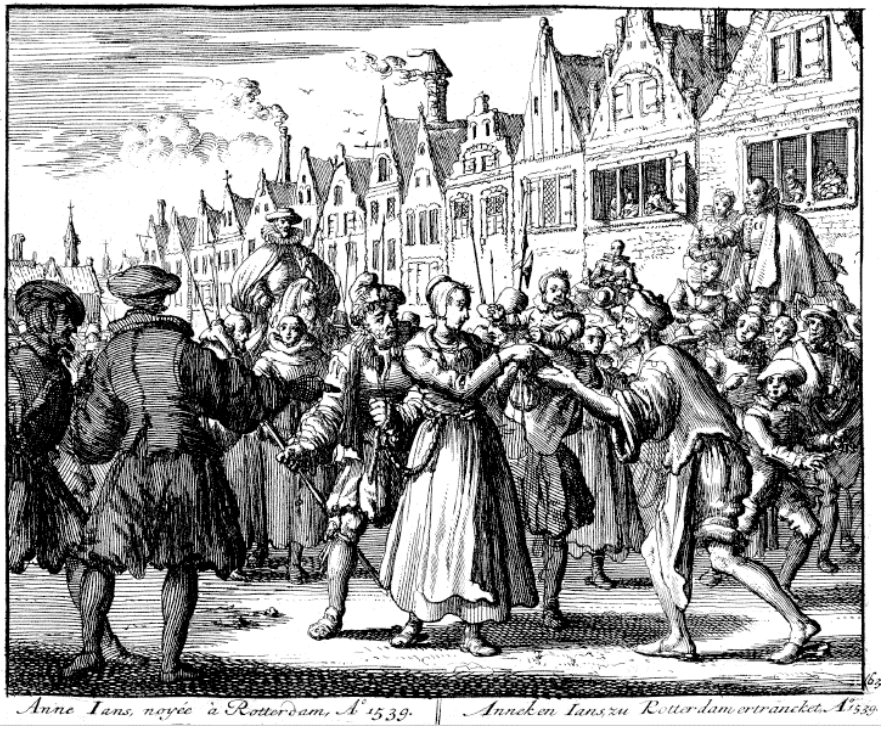

Figure 1 Image Credit: Thieleman J. van Braght, Het Bloedig Tooneel, Der Martelaers Spiegel Der Doops-gesinde (2nd ed.; Amsterdam, 1685), 143.

That struggle has been to articulate and participate in a vision of the world as narrated by scripture. Time and again she has rubbed up against the rough edges of reality and that vision of the world has blistered. Here, at the end, she has come to a resting place.

Tending Scripture's Wounds

At the end of the "Trumpet Song," Jansz draws on promises of vindication for Zion from Isaiah 62:1. "Your King is coming to set you free."[30] What did this promise mean to her several years later as she drowned in a distributary of the Rhine?

Jansz exemplifies what I want to call, in relation to scripture, the wound of failure. In its collective form, it is an experience shared with many religious movements whose messianic hopes have gone apparently unfulfilled, from the variously construed expectations for a swift *parousia* in the earliest days of the Christianity down to modern movements like the Shakers and Seventh Day Adventists. It consists, essentially, in the dissonance that readers of scripture might feel between the promises of the Bible and the apparent absence of fulfillment of those promises in their own lives. These broken promises may herald apocalyptic transformation, but they may simply speak of blessing, or bare survival. Consider these words from the epigraph of the memoir of Holocaust survival by the Talmud scholar David Weiss Halivni: "Said the Almighty," he writes, quoting Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy 4:2, "'If you keep what is written in this book, you will be spared this sword; if not, you will be consumed by it.'"[31] He continues, in his own words, "We clung to the book, yet were consumed by the sword." In the fires of the Holocaust, what could be discerned of the divine faithfulness promised to Israel in its scriptures?

Anna Jansz does not bear the innocence we ascribe to such a victim. Her suffering is bound up with a web of moral ambiguities. But the wound of failure visible in her life extends to these diverse cases, and to the fabric of everyday tragedy, not simply collective political calamities. A child hears

[30] Anna Jansz, "Trumpet Song," in *Elisabeth's Manly Courage,* 59. Paraphrasing Isaiah 62:11. All subsequent biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

[31] David Weiss Halivni, *The Book and the Sword: A Life of Learning the Shadow of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996), book epigraph.

in Sunday School how David defeated Goliath but learns that the bullies at school will not be overcome so easily. A gay teenager with internalized homophobia comes to doubt he is "fearfully and wonderfully made." Someone praying for fertility finds in the biblical Hannah a figure to emulate but discovers with sorrow that their story will have no Samuel. Scripture's patterns grate against these dissonances, large and small. These are wounds, bitter gaps forced between the Bible and those who seek to be guided by it.

If Anna Jansz thought 2 Esdras and Revelation foretold the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in the 16th century, she was of course badly mistaken. But I want to press a claim that goes a bit further. Avoiding the wounds and dissonances of failure in a life with scripture is not simply a matter of adopting a better interpretive procedure. Even innocent readings yield such pain, as the writings of Halivni illustrate. This pain is, rather, a routine part of a life lived with scripture. This is so not only because of human limitations, but because the pain of this wound of failure runs through scripture itself.

The biblical scholar David Carr has argued that much of the Bible was written in response to various historical traumas. "Suffering, and survival of it, was written into the Bible."[32] Compiled amid Babylonian exile, Genesis describes with forlorn hope a world created in love by a God who has not yet forsaken Israel. At scripture's end, the book of Revelation emerges too from the wound of failure. Written in the midst of persecution, wrestling with the absence of Christ, it provides a picture of longing for redemption and evocative imagery of the satisfaction of those desires. "Lord Almighty God, when wilt Thou avenge the blood that has been shed?" (Revelation 6:10) The Gospels themselves record the aftermath of this wound. Christ gathered a circle of disciples who believed he was the Messiah who would sit again on the throne of David. His death shattered these hopes. Even his resurrection left them confused, as the shock of the shorter ending of the gospel of Mark attests and the beginning of the book of Acts confirms. "Lord, is *this* [emphasis added] the time when you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) The church is founded on the transmutation of apparently misunderstood promises into a new kind of hope.

[32] David Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 5.

2 Esdras—a key text for Jansz—was also composed amid trauma.[33] Traditionally held to be written by Ezra himself after the return from exile, modern scholarship suggests an origin after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The book thus emerges from a later exile and takes place, rhetorically, during the first exile from Jerusalem. The pain of exile pervades the book. Summarizing his complaint to the angel Uriel, Ezra demands to know "why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles in disgrace; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes" (4:23). Uriel reveals to Ezra a series of stories and metaphors about the purpose of suffering and the significance of exile and the coming judgment which will set all to right. Ezra remains skeptical, remarking later that "it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam" (7:116). Ezra's own transformation happens in the tenth chapter of the book, when he comes across a woman grieving the loss of her son and both consoles her and encourages her to grieve for all her people. In that moment the woman is transformed into a radiant city and Ezra perceives that Zion's glory, though nearly extinguished at present, will yet come. His vocation, in the aftermath of these visions, is to shepherd the faithfulness of his people. This is a model of how the wound of failure is expressed and tended in scripture: humans question divine faithfulness amid suffering, recalling promises that now seem out of reach. God then renews them for continued faithfulness until all harms have been redressed.

Part of the power of an apocalypse like 2 Esdras—or Daniel, Ezekiel, or Revelation—is that it allows sufferers to live already in anticipation of future justice. Suffering the trials of persecution may therefore become a way of participating, however distantly in the triumph of God over the forces of evil. Howard Thurman describes this reclamation of moral agency more generally as Christianity's "answer to the threat of violence." He argues that, "to the degree to which a [person] knows *this*"—that is, knows that the moral intelligibility of the universe flows not from their oppressors but from their participation in the story God has already written—they "are unconquerable

[33] For the book's importance to early Anabaptists, see Jonathan Seiling, "Solae (quae?) Scripturae: Anabaptists and the Apocrypha," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 80 no. 1 (2006): 5-34.

from within and without."[34] This aspect of apocalyptic language is what James Cone calls "the transcendent present."[35] For enslaved Africans singing spirituals that anticipated redemption, such language was not escapism, it was a sign that "God's future had broken into the slave's historical present."[36] Apparent impotence against enduring injustice was remade into a powerful persistence. That is the power of the promises of apocalyptic literature.

2 Esdras emerges from a particular wound of failure—two exiles—and provides a model of response. When readers come to discern scripture wisely in the face of suffering, they participate in that scriptural pattern. As the reader encounters scripture, the events of scripture happen "again" for the reader—not as the communication of an abstract allegorical concept, but as an encounter with the same Word who was present at the events of scripture, superintended its writing, and now renews them for the reader.[37]

Following the pattern initiated by the figure of Ezra in these texts, such readers who are faced with the gap between scriptural promises of blessing and the reality of ongoing suffering may emerge with a stronger sense of participation in God's faithfulness. That gap between promised blessing and lived suffering is a "stumbling block"—in Origen's sense—which trips up the reader and causes them to inquire more deeply into the sense in which the promises of scripture might be spoken again wisely. If like Ezra or the enslaved Africans written about by Thurman and Cone, they are able to glimpse God's faithfulness amid suffering, readers may see how such promises can be claimed truthfully after all.

The risk is that this "happening again" becomes ossified. One of the paradigmatic scriptural moments revealing the significance of apocalyptic

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[34] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 46. Emphasis added.

[35] James Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1972), 92.

[36] Ibid., 92.

[37] As Origen writes, the gospels "present the sojourn of Christ and prepare for his coming *and produce it in the souls* [emphasis added] of those who are willing to receive the Word of God who stands at the door and knocks and wishes to enter their souls." Origen, *Commentary on John 1.26.* Quoted in John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 137. John David Dawson summarizes this dynamic effectively. "The ethical task is to read in a way that allows or enables that occurrence to happen 'again' for the present-day reader." Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity,* 137.

language comes in the Gospels' accounts of the transfiguration. Peter, John, and James go with Jesus up the mountain and behold the vision of Moses and Elijah flanking Jesus. Peter reveals the temptation most characteristic of human responses to such glimpses of glory. "'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said." (Luke 9:33). Peter grasps the moment and wants to hold on to it and remain on the mountain, to make a permanent home there. But Christians cannot do so, yet. Apocalyptic glimpses of the Lord's triumph are, for now, a temporary glory. To make permanent dwellings out of these words of scripture is to misuse them.

If the disappointment of scriptural promises is like a seed that grows and may produce the fruit of wisdom, that same seed may also produce thorns causing further pain. Consider how Paul's words to the marginal Christian community in Rome—not apocalypse, merely counsel—became a spur to violence in the twelfth-century abbot Bernard of Clairvaux's preaching as he urged the Christians of the Holy Roman Empire to join the Second Crusade. He quoted Romans 13:4, assuring them that theirs was not an errand of sinful murder: "[I]f he kills, he is serving Christ, for as a minster of God 'he does not carry the sword in vain.'"[38]

The life of Anna Jansz and the broader Münster movement demonstrates this characteristic danger of scripture's apocalyptic affirmation of the vindication of the suffering elect. Promises that generate moral agency can be turned to orders underwriting human actions that go astray. This is especially true when the word of comfort comes to those who have come into possession of power. Then the comforting word to an oppressed remnant may become the permission slip to cleanse Münster of those who refuse baptism or marriage. In such cases, scripture's powerful promises help to generate the same pain they initially redressed. What comforted Ezra's sense of failure also stimulated Jansz's hopes—hopes that would fail and disappoint her in turn.

The postliberal theologian George Lindbeck wrote of what he called the "intrasystemic" truth quality of Christian proclamation, calling both Anna Jansz and Bernard of Clairvaux to mind. "The crusader's battle cry "*Christus est Dominus,*"…is false when used to authorize cleaving the skull of

[38] Quoted in Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word,* 283.

the infidel."[39] For Lindbeck this example demonstrated that the truthfulness of a statement consists not simply in its reference to some deeper reality but in its coherence with other practices and beliefs. Lest we slip into mere coherentism, with George Hunsinger we might add that for the crusader, "the deed is falsified by the word."[40] The crusader's act is false *because* Christ truly is Lord, a different kind of Lord entirely.

This Lord faced the same temptation to grasp scripture's promises too tightly. On the pinnacle of the temple, the devil tempts Jesus with the words of scripture. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" (Matthew 4:6) These temptations occur just after Jesus's baptism and the Father's declaration that he was "my Son, the Beloved" (Matthew 3:17). What kind of Sonship will this be? Jesus's response to the devil's temptations—"Do not put the Lord your God to the test"—points to the difficulty I have been tracing in this chapter. But his words here are not only a scriptural maxim that rebuts and qualifies the devil's quotation of Psalm 91. Christ's proverb has a history.

After their deliverance from slavery, the people of Israel were tempted as well. In the wilderness at Massah, they doubted the faithfulness of the God who had brought them out of Egypt and promised them a new land, but who seemed unable to provide water in their moment of need. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? To kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (Exodus 17:3).[41] At Massah, the people of Israel were confronted by the wound of failure. As with Jansz after the failures of Münster, the promise seemed to have gone terribly wrong. In anger, Moses provided them with water by striking a rock (which later patristic exegetes read Christologically as the crucified Christ). Later, in Deuteronomy 6:16, as Moses instructs the people on how they shall live in the land, he commands, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah."

[39] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 64.

[40] George Hunsinger, "Truth as Self-Involving: Barth and Lindbeck on the Cognitive and Performative Aspects of Truth in Theological Discourse," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61 no. 1 (Spring 1993), 47.

[41] Numbers 20 contains a different but parallel account, where the failure of Moses is intertwined with that of the people.

When Jesus responds to the devil's prompt to throw himself from the temple by quoting Moses, he calls forward this whole saga of faithfulness, wounded hope, and reproof. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" is a saying, a caution against speaking a scriptural promise too boldly; it is also a story, a recollection of comfort and warning. In this way, it says: do not give up hope. You do not yet see how scripture will be fulfilled; you must not press it too hard. The God who brought you thus far will carry you through, but you must not assume you know how. Jesus's deployment of Deuteronomy 6:16 sounds like a rejection of martyrdom for martyrdom's sake.

Jesus does not throw himself from the temple. He does not claim a scriptural promise and force its fulfillment; instead, others lift him up onto the cross. There, the wisdom of God is put to the test by sinful humanity and, in the resurrection, not found wanting. If the negative command is "Do not put the Lord your God to the test"—as at Massah, as at Golgotha—then its positive corollary might be something from the same scriptural moment, in Exodus 14:14: "The Lord will fight for you and you have only to keep still." Christ the wisdom of God has already passed the test. What remains is participation in that wisdom, a kind of keeping still.

~

At her death, Anna Jansz does not possess the fullness of this wisdom. Still, she gains a little, and it is worth lingering over its character. To see it more clearly, I want to stipulate a definition of wisdom, for present purposes, as the skill of knowing how to speak which scriptural locutions, and when, and of what.[42] My own examples might include: "If there are children in your house, say the Levitical benediction to them at bedtime" or "Do not read Romans 13 without remembering who killed Paul." In light of this definition, the broader question of this paper might be reformulated more specifically as: who may speak which statements from 2 Esdras, and how and of what? In her *Testament,* Anna does not repudiate the faith that brought her death. Nor does she turn away in anger from the scriptures that she had read as

[42] I owe this notion of scriptural wisdom to Mark James. "Who may say these words? On what occasion? With respect to what?" Mark James, *Learning the Language of Scripture: Origen, Wisdom, and the Logic of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 24.

promising immediate vindication. Instead, she revisits them. What emerges is a wiser sense of how to speak the apocalyptic words of scripture.

I summarize this difference in two maxims. The first is a pair of two:

"Speak 2 Esdras 2:40 as a future hope" and

"Pray Revelation 6:10 as a present plea."

"Oh Zion," 2 Esdras 2:40 begins, "conclude the list of the transfigured! Your number will soon be complete." In her "Trumpet Song," Jansz quoted this not merely as an imminent reality, but an immediate command. In her *Testament,* this trope, the completion of the number of the elect, figures again, but the image of 2 Esdras refers now to a distant reality. Instead, Revelation 6:10 assumes more prominence as a plea for deliverance rooted in the present. She writes,

> This way was trodden by the dead under the altar, who cry, saying: 'Lord, Almighty God, when wilt Thou avenge the blood that has been shed? ...It was said to them; Wait yet for a little season, until the number of your brethren that are yet to be killed for the testimony of Jesus, be fulfilled' (Revelation 6:10-11).

Jansz's temporal horizon has expanded. Judgment will come later, not now. It is a simple observation, but one that is most clearly visible as a distinction between the temporal reference of specific passages, an earned and practical wisdom.

Here is a second maxim that captures Jansz's growth in wisdom, this time concerning not the timing of the judgment, but its object and character: "Hebrews 12:6 amends present prayers for judgment on enemies."

In Jansz's "Trumpet Song," suffering had featured as a temporary trial before the justice of God arrived. Here in her *Testament,* not only has the final judgment been delayed, as it were, but the intervening judgment falls most heavily on the elect, not the perishing world. She encourages her son to "enter in through the strait gate, receive the chastisement and instruction of the Lord, bow your shoulders under His yoke…for 'He accepts or receives no son, whom He does not chasten'" (Hebrews 12:6). Jansz draws on a variety of scriptural texts to make this point again and again: the way of faithfulness requires suffering. "Judgment must begin at the house of God,"

she writes, echoing 1 Peter 4:17. The end will not come for a while yet, and in the meantime, suffering is a mark of righteousness. This is her bitter wisdom, and it is a path worth emulating.

But it is not yet perfect wisdom. Consider this second interpretive maxim I drew out of Jansz's *Testament* about the suffering of the righteous. Here, surely, is a bit of hard-won wisdom that yet requires further refinement. When the devil prompts Christ to throw himself from the temple, he does not acquiesce. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test," might, I think, be read as a maxim modifying Hebrews 12:6's affirmation of suffering, at least as it has been put to use in the Anabaptist martyr legacy. The Lord may indeed chasten those whom she loves, as Hebrews threatens, but this is no recommendation of chastening itself. Martyrdom names what happens because of the martyr's love for life, and the giver of life, not what happens because of the martyr's love for death. When all we recall of the martyr is their grisly determination to death, the texture of their love vanishes. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test," for "you have only to keep still." We might say more about the wisdom of Anna Jansz, perhaps about the love we owe the world, or about what it means to speak the promises of Israel as a Gentile—how election is a gift contrary to Gentile nature, not a possession. But all this might be summed up with the observation that interpretive wisdom is iterative. It requires constant testing and refinement not simply within a life—as Jansz exemplifies—but in community and by the memory that spans generations. That is to say, the wisdom of her heirs depends in part upon right remembering.

Such remembering comes with a difficulty not unlike that which faced Jansz in speaking scripture's promises well. How are Anabaptists to remember someone like Anna Jansz well? Which Jansz? The apocalyptically minded fanatic? A member of the cult of David Joris? A chastened pacifist resigned to death? Though not the most famous of Anabaptist martyrs, the drama of her final farewell to her son Isaiah has rendered her an attractive figure to summon forward as a witness to righteousness, or at least the righteousness of the one doing the remembering. David Joris first published her *Testament* and "Trumpet Song" immediately after her death, but he was not alone. Other martyrs copied her words in their own farewell messages,[43]

[43] "A Testament Made By Maeyken van Deventer For Her Children," *Martyrs Mirror,* 977. I

and apparently within weeks of her death, Anabaptists in Hamburg began singing a song about her drowning and final words to her son.[44] The Amish recall her every time they sing the 18th hymn in their *Ausbund* which commemorates the same moment. In 1562, the first Anabaptist martyrology, *Het Offer des Heeren* ("The Sacrifice of the Lord") included Jansz within it, but elided all mention of her connection to David Joris, or her "Trumpet Song."[45] Some earlier editions of the *Martyrs Mirror* include her letter to David Joris, but the present edition does not. Historians are similarly divided and selective. Werner Packull called Jansz one of several "'misplaced' martyrs in the *Mirror"* because of her apocalypticism, but later revised his judgment;[46] another scholar insisted she was a deluded follower of David Joris to the very end;[47] another held her up as a suitably transformed pacifist and therefore a "model martyr"[48] whose inclusion in the *Martyrs Mirror* was "entirely justified."[49] I am no neutral observer: I want Jansz to be the transformed pacifist.

Remembering the martyrs well and speaking scripture wisely both fall under the same discipline of hope. Remembering rightly in Anna Jansz's case

owe this observation to David Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 348.

[44] Nanne van der Zijpp, "Hymnology of the Mennonites in the Netherlands," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 31 no. 1 (January 1957), 11.

[45] Bradley Gregory, noting how later versions of the *Sacrifice of the Lord* left out martyrs associated with rival Anabaptist groups, suggests that "the larger structure of martyrdom in early modern Christianity—the link between confessional affiliation and martyr recognition—was replicated on a smaller scale within one branch of Anabaptism." *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 235.

[46] Werner Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam: A Historical Investigation of an Early Anabaptist Heroine," in *Archive for Reformation History,* 78 (1987), 170. Packull, however, revises his judgment somewhat in later work.

[47] De Bakker suggests that Anna Jansz returned to the Netherlands at the end of 1538 because David Joris was attempting to gather "all the remnants of the disillusioned survivors of Münster around Christmas 1538—exactly three and a half years after the collapse of the Anabaptist kingdom—in Delft" to await the apocalypse at the home of his mother. "Lost in Translation: Re-Examining the Sources of Early Dutch Anabaptism," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 92 no. 1 (January 2018), 54-84.

[48] Timothy Nyhof, "The Elusive Image of the Martyr Anneke Janszdr. of Rotterdam," *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 30 no. 2 (Fall 2009), 37.

[49] Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam," 342.

requires holding her whole life out as a sign of hope and confession of sin, a way for Anabaptists to identify themselves "as oppressor and traitor, yet also the penitent and restored kin of Christ."[50] How do my failings participate in hers? How do the little redemptions of her life make possible the little redemptions of mine? To remember well is to hold together these fragments in the hope that wisdom will teach their application. So too with scripture. To read scripture wisely is to be disciplined by the hope that all of its fragments, its unfulfilled promises, may indeed be spoken well and truly by Christ. It is to believe that these wounded scriptures that seem to contradict one another, or rub up against the hard-won lessons of experience, are gathered together in the mind of God.

Jansz is not a model of perfection in the art of exegesis. Hers was, after all, a lonely model of interpretation, damaged by bad models and a lack of community. Good interpretation requires reading in rowdy communion across the generations. The state violence that killed her cut that communion short. What Jansz does model, however, is something far more important than exegetical method. She exemplifies perseverance under the discipline of hope. Without such hope the Word cannot become flesh in the mouths of scripture's speakers as they slowly cobble together the bittersweet wisdom to speak it more truthfully. It is the same hope that helps Christians remember the martyrs, past and present, and all their burdens. Someday all these fragments will be gathered up.

Nathan Hershberger recently completed a PhD at Duke University and teaches at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

[50] Rowan Williams, *Resurrection* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1982, 2002), 51.

"Bonhoeffer would be a good Anabaptist": Harold S. Bender and the Early Reception of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Christopher P.W. Sundby

Abstract

The author argues that the historical-geographical distance between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Harold S. Bender is perhaps shorter than currently realized. On this basis, the author goes on to suggest, via a survey of Bonhoeffer's reception among North American Mennonites, that the relative prominence of Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* in Mennonite circles in the 1950's is important for contextualizing contemporary debates about Anabaptist readings of Bonhoeffer and his pacifism.

Introduction

In October 1923, a young Dietrich Bonhoeffer enrolled in a dogmatics course taught by Karl Heim, Professor of Dogmatics at the University of Tübingen. Also in the class of six hundred students was a twenty-six-year-old Mennonite from Indiana, Harold S. Bender.[1] Heim's course was Bender's favorite: "More than any other teacher at Tübingen, he affected Harold's theological frame of reference."[2] Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, was "not drawn in [Heim's] direction and kept a critical distance."[3] Bender was also self-consciously aware of the fact that he "was hearing a Lutheran interpretation, […] but he clearly agreed."[4] Bender took two other courses with Heim while at Tübingen. Although it is unlikely that Bender and Bonhoeffer met in 1923, this anecdote shows their diverging theological interests and also Bender's willingness to learn from those outside his Mennonite tradition. Twenty

[1] Albert N. Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1998), 154.
[2] Ibid., 155. See pages 154-157.
[3] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times*, ed. Victoria Barnett, trans. Eric Mosbacher et al., Rev. ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 55.
[4] Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962*, 155.

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years later, Bender would again learn substantially from another Lutheran, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, largely through his book *The Cost of Discipleship*.[5]

This essay begins with speculation on whether Bender read Bonhoeffer's book *Nachfolge* (*Discipleship*), published in German in 1937, prior to Bender's influential presentation of *The Anabaptist Vision* at the end of 1943.[6] In the first half of this paper, through several vignettes, I shorten the historical-geographical distance between Bender and Bonhoeffer and show that Bender likely knew who Bonhoeffer was in the 1930s even while there remains no direct evidence that Bender was influenced by Bonhoeffer prior to 1943. The essay then shifts to surveying Bonhoeffer's reception by North American Mennonites in the 1950s, through Bender, the Concern Group, the Puidoux Conferences, J.L. Burkholder, and Guy F. Hershberger. I argue that Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* rose to prominence and textbook status in some Mennonite circles in spite of knowledge of his role in the resistance and his complicated other writings. This background is important for contextualizing contemporary debates about Anabaptist readings of Bonhoeffer and his pacifism.[7]

Bender & Cornelius Krahn

This first vignette, in the mid-1930s, brings together a Mennonite student of Bonhoeffer's—Cornelius Krahn—and Bender. I argue that it is likely that Bender heard of Bonhoeffer through Krahn in 1935.

Nine years after Bender and Bonhoeffer were classmates in Tübingen, the soon-to-be historian Cornelius Krahn—a Chortitza Colony Mennonite who left Russia in 1926—was a student of Bonhoeffer's at the University of Berlin where he was lecturing in theology during the winter semester of

[5] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948).

[6] Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Church History* 13, no. 1 (March 1944): 3–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/3161001.

[7] The debate began largely with the publication of Mark Thiessen Nation, Anthony G. Siegrist, and Daniel P. Umbel, *Bonhoeffer the Assassin? Challenging the Myth, Recovering His Call to Peacemaking* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); For a response to many of the criticisms over the following decade by Bonhoeffer scholars Clifford Green, Victoria Barnett, and Michael DeJonge, see Mark Thiessen Nation, *Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis: Recovering the True Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022).

1932-33.[8] During the semester, Krahn enrolled in twenty hours of courses with eleven professors, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[9] Krahn recalls that Bonhoeffer's "lectures on the 'Nature of the Church' […] were very inspiring and had some influence on my choosing to write my dissertation on 'Menno Simons' View of the Church.'"[10] For Krahn, this time in Germany was a time of "a country in despair and in search of identity on many fronts," and he was "witness to the burning of synagogues and the beating up of Jews."[11] As Robert Kreider describes it, "In that fateful year of 1932-3, [Krahn] attended the lectures of Dietrich Bonhoeffer […], heard the sermons of Martin Niemöller in Dahlem, saw the burning of the Reichstag and the first systematic Nazi persecution of the Jews and Adolf Hitler's bold seizure of power."[12] Krahn was also in Barth's class in 1934 in Bonn, when Barth refused the *Heil Hitler* greeting.[13] Then in 1935, Krahn bicycled to Heidelberg to study with Walther Köhler, an historian focusing on Luther, Zwingli, and Anabaptism.[14] In Heidelberg Krahn met Bender who was also studying under Köhler.[15] Bender had arrived in Heidelberg in April 1935 with the hope of finishing his courses and thesis on Conrad Grebel quickly, and by the deadline of August "with some elation, he delivered the nearly five-hundred-page tome to the office of the dean of the theological faculty."[16] Krahn, inspired by Bonhoeffer's teaching, wrote on Menno Simons and the Church.[17] According to Albert N. Keim—Bender's biographer—Bender was initially "surprised to find that a young Russian Mennonite was also completing work in Anabaptist history under Professor Köhler."[18] Bender and Krahn "struck up a warm

[8] Cornelius Krahn, "Between the Volga and the Rhine 1902-1936," *Mennonite Life* 32, no. 3 (September 1977): 8.
[9] Ibid., 8.
[10] Cornelius Krahn, review of *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, by Wolf-Dieter Zimmerman and Ronald Gregor Smith, *Mennonite Life* 23, no. 1 (January 1968): 44.
[11] Krahn, "Between the Volga and the Rhine 1902-1936," 8.
[12] Robert Kreider, "In Remembrance of Cornelius Krahn," in *Cornelius Krahn, August 3, 1902-August 3, 1990*, ed. Hilda Krahn (North Newton, 1991), 21.
[13] Krahn, "Between the Volga and the Rhine 1902-1936," 9.
[14] Ibid., 8.
[15] Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962*, 247.
[16] Ibid., 245.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 247.

friendship"[19] which lasted after Bender returned to Goshen College in 1936 and Krahn moved to Kansas where he became the director of the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College. In an issue of *Mennonite Life* in 1977 dedicated to his life, Krahn ended a short memoir with a story related to Bonhoeffer's differing receptions in the years after the war:

> During a visit among the Mennonites of West Prussian background in Uruguay […] the electricity went off and I shifted in total darkness to my experience in Berlin in the days of Niemöller and Bonhoeffer, whose faith and courage had helped me in the days of great changes. At the moment when these names were mentioned, a voice in the audience shouted in no uncertain terms *Landesverräter* (traitors)! A few weeks later we were in Espelkamp, Germany, in a large tent meeting. Among the several thousand people were a large number of Mennonites from West Prussia and Russia. How surprised I was when the songleader announced that we would all sing the hymn that Bonhoeffer had composed on the day before he was executed.[20]

As a student in Germany in 1932-33, Krahn was deeply impacted by all that he saw and learned and noted that Bonhoeffer had an impact on his choice of doctoral study. Considering the closeness of Krahn and Bender during these studies, it is highly likely that Krahn mentioned Bonhoeffer to Bender during their many hours of shared study and travel. Bender may have also heard about Bonhoeffer during this time through another avenue, the Rhön Bruderhof.

The Rhön Bruderhof & Bonhoeffer

This second vignette also indirectly connects Bender with Bonhoeffer

[19] Ibid.

[20] Krahn, "Between the Volga and the Rhine 1902-1936," 10; This brief memoir was noted in the 1988 IBS newsletter, Cornelius Krahn, "Bonhoeffer Memories of Cornelius Krahn," ed. James P. Kelley, Geffrey Kelly, and Clifford Green, *Newsletter: International Bonhoeffer Society*, no. 39 (October 1988): 6–7; Based on another telling of these events by Krahn, they can be dated to June/July 1975. See Cornelius Krahn, "Anabaptist Anniversary Is Focus Of European Conf. at Bienenberg," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, August 7, 1975, 2. In these reflections, Krahn labels the reaction by the Mennonites in Uruguay as "survivals of the old spirit of 'Hitler,'" and notes that this spirit "is probably more pronounced in an 'exiled isolation' in South America," 2.

through the Rhön Bruderhof, a German Anabaptist community founded in 1920 by Eberhard and Emmy Arnold.[21] I first show that the Bruderhof and Bonhoeffer were well known to each other, and then argue that Bonhoeffer's explicit peace witness in the 1930s may have been known to Bender through the Bruderhof at the 1936 Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in Amsterdam.

In late 1933, after the Gestapo raided their community for protesting a plebiscite, the Bruderhof were seeking aid and allies.[22] In December 1933—a month after the raid—two Bruderhof members, Hannes Boller and Hans Meier, travelled to the Gestapo offices to state their nonviolent position. After receiving little information from the Gestapo, they visited with Benjamin H. Unruh—a prominent German Mennonite—to "see if there was any possibility of our standing with the Mennonites in a joint witness" against National Socialism.[23] Unruh and Dr. Ernst Crous met with the two Bruderhof members, and according to Meier, they "understood our concern immediately, but declared that the present-day German Mennonites had a different attitude to the state and government: now they were willing to obey the state, including performing military service."[24] Unruh did, however, offer to assist the Bruderhof in emigrating to Canada. After this disappointing meeting, Boller and Meier visited with Martin Niemöller, with whom the Bruderhof had been seeking to meet since the founding of the Pastors' Emergency League in September 1933.[25] Niemöller was a conservative pastor who had been a supporter of the National Socialist rise to power, greeting "Hitler's appointment with euphoria."[26] But the Aryan paragraph caused Niemöller to become critical of the State, accusing it of overstepping its boundaries into church affairs. They met with Niemöller in Berlin, and Meier recalled suggesting they should all "stand together in the escalating

[21] Emmy Barth, *An Embassy Besieged: The Story of a Christian Community in Nazi Germany* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 20.
[22] Ibid., 95–107.
[23] Hans Meier, unpublished memoirs. Cited in Barth, *An Embassy Besieged*, 124.
[24] Ibid., 124.
[25] Thomas Nauerth, *Zeugnis, Liebe Und Widerstand: Der Rhönbruderhof 1933-1937* (Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018), 278.
[26] Matthew D. Hockenos, *Then They Came for Me: Martin Niemöller, the Pastor Who Defied the Nazis* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 74.

spiritual fight and make a united Christian witness against the dark powers of National Socialism. But [Niemöller] refused to have anything to do with us because we were not obedient to the government's order to do military service."[27] A short discussion followed about enemy love and what obedience entails, but Niemöller, who was not a pacifist, remained unconvinced by the two Bruderhof members. Six months later, in June of 1934, Hans Meier also met with Karl Barth in Bonn to discuss the Christian response to National Socialism, but due to time restraints was only able to pass along a couple of Eberhard Arnold's books.[28]

These encounters connect German Mennonites with the Bruderhof, both of whom Bender was acquainted with, and both of whom were acquainted with Bonhoeffer. Bender himself had visited the Bruderhof earlier in May 1930 and was impressed.[29] Hannes Boller must also have met or wrote to Bonhoeffer in late 1933 or early 1934. On March 6, 1934, Boller wrote from the Bruderhof in Germany to Hardy Arnold in London, "I told a Pastor Bonhoeffer …about you. One of his colleagues in Berlin told me last wee [*sic*] that he would probably be very much interested in a life based on the Sermon on the Mount."[30] Although Boller and Meier's meeting with Niemöller was unsuccessful in taking a nonviolent stand against National Socialism, it led to both Boller and Niemöller mentioning the Bruderhof community to Bonhoeffer in 1934.

On April 7, 1934, in a missing letter, Bonhoeffer wrote from London to Hardy Arnold, the son of the founder of the Bruderhof. Hardy responded that he "too had heard about you [Bonhoeffer] on various occasions, in London as well through Henry Ecroyd and his wife."[31] Hardy had recently returned to

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[27] Hans Meier, unpublished memoirs. Cited in Emmy Barth, *An Embassy Besieged: The Story of a Christian Community in Nazi Germany* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 124.

[28] Nauerth, *Zeugnis, Liebe Und Widerstand*, 278.

[29] Eberhard Arnold, *Brothers Unite: An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhön Bruderhof with the Hutterian Church* (Plough Publishing House, Hutterian Brethren, 1988), 227–34; See also Barth, *An Embassy Besieged*, 265–66.

[30] "Bruderhof Correspondence with Bonhoeffer" (The Bruderhof, 2019), https://www.bruderhof.com/-/media/files/bruderhof/new-resources-2019/bruderhof-history/bonhoeffer_d_letters.pdf?la=en.

[31] Henry Ecroyd is unknown, but as shown, one of the known occasions where Arnold heard of Bonhoeffer was through the letter from Boller which mentioned "Pastor Bonhoeffer." Letter 1/92a in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *London: 1933-1935*, ed. Keith Clements, trans. Isabel

Birmingham—where he received Bonhoeffer's letter—after helping set up a new Bruderhof children's school in Liechtenstein in response to the Gestapo raid which closed their school at the Rhön Bruderhof. Hardy wrote, "I would like to come to see you in London, either with one of those cheap trains, or maybe not until June when I [shall be leaving] England."[32]

In a June 14, 1934 letter from Hardy Arnold to his father Eberhard Arnold, Hardy recalled that Bonhoeffer "some time ago … wrote me asking if he might visit me here, or I him there, because he is interested in founding a community of brothers with some of his students, based entirely on the Sermon on the Mount."[33] When Hardy met with Bonhoeffer, "That first talk of ours lasted several hours. At its close, he stressed again his first priority, the nonviolent overthrow of Hitler and his National Socialist government. This meant a trip to see Gandhi was first on his agenda. Second, though almost equally important, was the establishment of community life with a group of students."[34] It was at the end of this first talk as well that Hardy recalled that "Bonhoeffer purchased the whole set of our series called *Source Books of Christian Witnesses Throughout the Centuries*, fifteen volumes in all!"[35] Hardy also recalled a second meeting: "A few days after this conversation Bonhoeffer phoned me, and we arranged another meeting in a London teashop with some of his student friends.[36] There we again had a deep and lively exchange on basically the same subjects."[37]

After the second visit, Hardy wrote to his father that Bonhoeffer hoped to visit the Bruderhof community:

> They are very much looking to us in the Bruderhof . . . On the essentials we are in agreement with B: (1) no private property, putting all goods under the administration of the community; (2) nonviolence. The only thing is that he does not seem to have

Best, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English 13 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 133.

[32] Letter 1/92a in Bonhoeffer, 134.

[33] Letter 1/114a in Bonhoeffer, *DBWE 13*, 158.

[34] Hardy Arnold, "Conversations With Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *The Plough* 6 (September 1984): 6.

[35] Ibid., 5. The Bruderhof sold books to raise funds.

[36] His student friends were Herbert Jehle and Vicar Weckerling, both of whom visited the Bruderhof in the summer of 1934.

[37] Arnold, "Conversations With Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 6.

> grasped the issue of the church-community as being led by the Spirit of God. Perhaps you can help him. I gave him the chapter on the Holy Spirit from the *Innenland*.[38]

Hardy wrote to his fiancé, Edith Böker, that Bonhoeffer planned to visit the Bruderhof the next week and Gandhi in September 1934, "to spend half a year in his *order*." [39] Bonhoeffer and his students wanted to learn from "*Gandhi* and the *Hutterite* movement."[40] Hardy wrote his father that Bonhoeffer "is going to *telephone* on Wednesday [June 20, 1934], probably from Berlin to discuss everything with you briefly and what is the best way for him to get there."[41] Bonhoeffer apparently never phoned from Berlin, as he was too busy meeting with Martin Niemöller and directing "a training course for pastors, vicars, and students" for the Pastors' Emergency League.[42] When Bonhoeffer did not show up, Eberhard Arnold phoned Bonhoeffer's mother in Berlin, "but perhaps she has not been able to deliver our message to him."[43] In a June 26, 1934, letter to Hardy, Eberhard wrote,

> in the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who has not yet come to see us here although we telephoned him, the foundation of the renunciation of private property and holding of goods in common, as well as nonviolence, still seems to me, like many another such undertakings, to be quite far from the calling of the community by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This even though his declaration of intent to carry out the Sermon on the Mount, to live according to the words of Jesus, is very significant.[44]

Although Bonhoeffer never visited, he "was not unimpressed by his encounter with the Bruderhof movement. In Finkenwalde he adopted Eberhard Arnold's rule for the Bruderhof in Sannerz, that no member of the community might ever speak in a negative way about another who was

[38] Letter 1/114a in Bonhoeffer, *DBWE 13*, 160; See also Barth, *An Embassy Besieged*, 168.
[39] Letter 1/114b, Bonhoeffer, *DBWE 13*, 162.
[40] Emphasis original. Letter 1/114b, Bonhoeffer, 162.
[41] Letter 1/114a Bonhoeffer, 160.
[42] Letter 1/113, Bonhoeffer, 156.
[43] 1/115a, Bonhoeffer, 165.
[44] 1/115b, Bonhoeffer, 165.

absent."[45]

These encounters regarding Bonhoeffer and the Bruderhof reveal their shared pacifistic vision based on the Sermon on the Mount. This vision was brought by two other Bruderhof members to the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in 1936. Along with his visit to the Bruderhof in 1930, Bender and his father-in-law, John Horsch, were important in organizing Eberhard Arnold's trip to North American Hutterite colonies in 1930, with Horsch meeting Arnold when he landed in 1930.[46] The close connections between the Mennonites and the Bruderhof led to two Bruderhof members—Emmy Arnold and Hans Zumpe—being present at the conference two years after their dialogue with Bonhoeffer.[47] At the end of the conference, a small group of twenty-five attendees released a peace manifesto responding to growing European tensions. Also, from this peace group—which Bender chaired—began the I*nternational Mennonite Peace Committee.* In his book on the Bruderhof between 1933-37, Thomas Nauerth argues that this peace manifesto was possibly responding to Bonhoeffer's famous peace address at an ecumenical conference in August 1934 in Fanø, Denmark where Bonhoeffer asked, "Who will call us to peace so that the world will hear, will have to hear? So that all peoples may rejoice?"[48] According to Jean Lasserre who was at Fanø with Bonhoeffer, the address "dropped like a *bomb*."[49] Although there is no direct reference to Bonhoeffer in the peace manifesto, the Bruderhof members knew of Bonhoeffer as his friends had visited them

[45] Fn. 5 to letter 1/115b Bonhoeffer, 166.

[46] See Arnold, *Brothers Unite*.

[47] Orie O. Miller and Harold S. Bender, "An Account of the Third Mennonite World Conference Held at Amsterdam, Elspeet and Witmarsum, Holland, June 29 to July 3, 1936," *Gospel Herald*, September 24, 1936; Orie O. Miller and Harold S. Bender, "A Brief Account of the Third Mennonite World Conference Held at Amsterdam, Elspeet and Witmarsum, Netherlands, June 29 to July 3, 1936," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11, no. 1 (January 1937): 3–13.

[48] Nauerth, *Zeugnis, Liebe Und Widerstand*, 311; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Fanø Theses Paper and Address: The Church and the Peoples of the World," in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, ed. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2013), 397, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt22nm627.

[49] Emphasis original. F. Burton Nelson, "Response (to Dale W. Brown and Larry Rasmussen)," ed. Clifford Green, *Newsletter: International Bonhoeffer Society for Archive and Research*, no. 9 (December 1976): 6.

in the summer of 1934 during the same time Bonhoeffer gave his address.

These historical vignettes close the relational distance between Bender and Bonhoeffer in the 1930s and show a high likelihood that Bender knew of Bonhoeffer in the 1930s, and thus possibly knew of Bonhoeffer's 1937 book *Nachfolge* prior to his *Vision* address in 1943. William Klassen—who from 1949-54 "took every course Bender taught"[50]—claimed in 1971 that for Bender's *Vision* the "decisive impetus came from Bonhoeffer's "*Nachfolge*," a book that was published towards the end of the 1930s and that Bender used with the greatest appreciation in his teaching for years."[51] John H. Yoder also speculated in the 1970s that Bender was influenced by Bonhoeffer before 1943: "Might Bender have been moved toward this analysis [of discipleship] by reading Bonhoeffer? If so, he may have been one of the very first North Americans to appreciate it years before its first appearance in partial translation."[52] My research shows that there is currently no evidence that Bender read Bonhoeffer before 1949. The language of discipleship (*Nachfolge*) is largely the influence of Robert Friedmann, who published several essays in 1940 that used *Nachfolge* as a distinctive characteristic of the early Anabaptists.[53] As Keim notes, "in 1942 'discipleship' was not yet a Mennonite word," but became so after Friedmann's taking up of *Nachfolge Christi* from Johannes Kühn's *Toleranz und Offenbarung* (1923).[54] Bender then used 'discipleship' in his *Anabaptist Vision* and set the stage for an easy appropriation of Bonhoeffer's *The Cost Discipleship* among Mennonites in

[50] Bill Klassen, review of *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962*, by Albert N. Keim, *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 73, no. 2 (April 1999): 405.

[51] William Klassen, "Die Gestalt Des Glaubens in Der Nachfolge," in *Die Mennoniten*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1971), 42.

[52] John H. Yoder, "The Christological Presuppositions of Discipleship," in *Being Human, Becoming Human*, ed. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor, 1st ed., Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought (The Lutterworth Press, 2012), 133, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1cgfb5g.12.

[53] Robert Friedmann, "Anabaptism and Pietism, II," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 14, no. 3 (July 1940): 149–69; Robert Friedmann, "Conception of the Anabaptists," *Church History* 9, no. 4 (December 1940): 341–65, https://doi.org/10.2307/3160913.

[54] Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962*, 324; Johannes Kühn, *Toleranz Und Offenbarung: Eine Untersuchung Der Motive Und Motivformen Der Toleranz Im Offenbarungsgläubigen Protestantismus Zugleich Ein Versuch Zur Neueren Religion Und Geistesgeschichte* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1923).

the 1950s.[55]

Early North American Mennonite Receptions of Bonhoeffer

Although Bonhoeffer and some Anabaptists had direct encounters in the 1930s, there was no engagement with his works in North America until the 1950s. The second half of this essay lists the first references to Bonhoeffer that I could find in Mennonite writing, followed by further examples of early North American Mennonite engagements with Bonhoeffer, including those of Bender, the Concern Group, the Puidoux Conferences, J.L. Burkholder, and Guy F. Hershberger.

On December 22, 1949, Melvin Gingerich penned the first North American Mennonite review of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*.[56] Bonhoeffer's book, first published in German in 1937 as *Nachfolge*, was translated into English in 1948 and the first U.S. abridged edition appeared in 1949. Gingerich notes that "although Bonhoeffer did not accept the pacifist approach to the evils of the Hitler regime, he was, according to Leibholz [who wrote the preface], at the bottom of his heart, a pacifist."[57] Gingerich concludes by asserting that the book's "message is so identical to that of our Anabaptist forefathers that one marvels, and rejoices, that here is a deep and convincing testimony which we believe reaches into the very heart of the New Testament."[58] Notably, from the first published North American Mennonite writing on Bonhoeffer, there is already a clear comparison between his *Discipleship* and Anabaptist thinking.

A month later on January 20, 1950, Friedmann sent a letter to Bender mentioning that he had Bender's copy of Bonhoeffer's *Ethik* in German.[59]

[55] Friedmann notes, "It was not until 20 years later that H. S. Bender introduced the idea of discipleship into the discussion of the essence of Anabaptism again; since that time it has become more and more evident that this is perhaps the most adequate interpretation of the spirit of Anabaptism which can be formulated." Robert Friedmann, "Kühn, Johannes (b. 1887)," in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1958, https://gameo.org/index.

[56] Melvin Gingerich, "On My Desk," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, December 22, 1949.

[57] Ibid., 3. The full Leibholz sentence is, "This explains why Bonhoeffer did not take the pacifist line, although his aristocratic noble-mindedness and charming gentleness made him, at the bottom of his heart, a pacifist."

[58] Ibid.

[59] Robert Friedmann to Harold S. Bender, January 20, 1950, Harold Stauffer Bender Papers 1919-1962, General Correspondence, Box 21, Folder 9, Robert Friedman, Goshen College Archives.

Bender had just finished revising his book on Conrad Grebel, based on his doctoral work, and in August, 1950, the Mennonite Publishing House announced the addition of both *The Cost of Discipleship* and Bender's *Conrad Grebel* to their library.[60] It was also that same year, in May at a Conference on 'The Church and War' in Chicago, that Donovan E. Smucker referenced Bonhoeffer's "protests against what he calls 'cheap grace.' That is, a grace which abandons moral earnestness, losing that courageous witness against evil without which grace becomes antinomian and lawless."[61] References to cheap and costly grace became a popular line from Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* in Anabaptist works.

In an October 6, 1950 address at the Goshen College chapel, Atlee Beechy mentioned Bonhoeffer as "a German spiritual leader, killed by Hitler because of his beliefs" and quoted from *Discipleship* that Jesus's "disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others."[62] Beechy also reviewed *The Cost of Discipleship* for the October 1951 *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, stating that "The book presents in modern setting much of the early Anabaptist concept of discipleship," but also noting that "Some will question his position on infant baptism, his discussion on the nature of the church, or his position on nonresistance even though much of his writings indicate a deep and sympathetic understanding of this position."[63]

From these earliest sources, it is clear that Bonhoeffer was largely uncritically received in Mennonite thinking and was viewed and used as a source for validating Anabaptist convictions regarding discipleship. This is in spite of the fact that in July 1945—only a few months after Bonhoeffer's execution—the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell, described Bonhoeffer's intimate knowledge of the plot against Hitler, even while Bonhoeffer "was full of sorrow that things had come to such a pass in Germany, and that action like this was necessary" and "was obviously distressed in his mind

[60] "Your Publishing House: Editors Are Pleased," *Gospel Herald*, August 8, 1950, 800.
[61] Donovan E. Smucker, "The Theological Basis for Christian Pacifism," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 27, no. 3 (July 1953): 184.
[62] Atlee Beechy, "Implications of the Draft for Our Young People," *Gospel Herald*, November 21, 1950, 1141.
[63] Atlee Beechy, review of *The Cost of Discipleship*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 25, no. 4 (October 1951): 322, 323.

as to the lengths to which he had been driven by force of circumstances in the plot for the elimination of Hitler."[64] These recollections are from Bell's meeting with Bonhoeffer in Sigtuna, Sweden in May 1942.[65] It was also Reinhold Niebuhr—against whom much Anabaptist polemical ink has been spilled—who wrote a eulogy for Bonhoeffer in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* in March 1946. Niebuhr described Bonhoeffer as "a very astute political analyst" who thought it was his "duty to participate in the plot on Hitler's life."[66] These comments by Bell and Niebuhr show the early awareness of Bonhoeffer's role in the resistance and a tendency to read him, as Leibholz put it, as "a great realist."[67] Bonhoeffer's perceived role in the anti-Hitler plot was acknowledged early and helped make him and his works better known and was not initially viewed as a decisive hindrance to the adoption of themes—like cheap/costly grace, obedience, and suffering discipleship—from Bonhoeffer into Anabaptist thinking.

Bender, Concern Group, Puidoux Conferences & Bonhoeffer

By 1950, North American Anabaptists were beginning to reference Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* favorably, even though knowledge of his role in the resistance was widespread. Bender at Goshen College was teaching from *Discipleship* and had outlined the book with three pages of detailed notes.[68] As A.J. Klassen writes in his 1970 doctoral dissertation, "Bender's enthusiasm for Bonhoeffer's *Nachfolge* is not surprising. He was impressed by the fact that it appeared to be more biblical than traditional, and more Anabaptist than Lutheran. He at once recognized it as a contemporary expression of the original Anabaptist vision."[69] In 1950, Bender suggested in

[64] George Bell, "The Background of the Hitler Plot," *The Contemporary Review* (London, United Kingdom: A. Strahan, July 1, 1945), 206; Bell knew this from meeting with Bonhoeffer in 1942, see Sabine Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Resistance* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 165–91.

[65] On this meeting, see Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Resistance*, 165–91.

[66] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 1, no. 3 (March 1946): 3.

[67] Gerhard Leibholz in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R.H. Fuller, Third Printing (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 11.

[68] Nation, *Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis*, 169.; See also Abram John Klassen, "Discipleship in Anabaptism and Bonhoeffer" (Ph.D., Claremont, Claremont Graduate School, 1970), 130.

[69] Klassen, "Discipleship in Anabaptism and Bonhoeffer," 5.

a footnote that "in some respects, though not in all, Bonhoeffer would be a good Anabaptist."[70] Through the 1950s, to supplement or describe Bender's *Vision,* Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* became a primary text. William Klassen adds that Bender "virtually canonized Bonhoeffer's *Nachfolge*. We read Bonhoeffer in Bender's class—not Menno or Grebel."[71] For Bender however, the Bonhoeffer of *Discipleship* was in tension with the Bonhoeffer of *Ethics*. As A.J. Klassen notes,

> The post-war discovery of Bonhoeffer's concept of *Grenzfall* [the borderline situation][72] and the publication of *Widerstand und Ergebung* [Letters and Papers from Prison] in 1951 posed a serious problem for the recovery of the Anabaptist vision. Bender became alarmed at the apparent discontinuity between the "early" Bonhoeffer of *Nachfolge* and the "late" Bonhoeffer of the *Ethik*. His growing disenchantment with Bonhoeffer is not difficult to understand in the light of Anabaptist commitment to suffering-love and peace.[73]

This disenchantment that Bender felt about the discontinuity between *Discipleship* and Bonhoeffer's later works are problems that Anabaptist and other interpreters have tried to navigate since.[74] One view is to partially understand Bonhoeffer's reception in support of Bender's *Vision* through ethical content. Paul Martens argues that Bender and Yoder describe

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[70] Harold S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel c. 1498–1526: The Founder of the Swiss Brethren Sometimes Called Anabaptists* (1950; repr., Goshen: Mennonite Historical Society, 1971), 280 n. 6.

[71] William Klassen, "History and Theology: Some Reflections on the Present Status of Anabaptist Studies," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 53, no. 3 (July 1979): 198.

[72] "There are occasions when, in the course of historical life, the strict observance of the explicit law of a state, a corporation, a family, but also of a scientific discovery, entails a clash with the basic necessities of human life. In such cases, appropriate responsible action departs from the domain governed by laws and principles, from the normal and regular, and instead is confronted with the extraordinary situation of ultimate necessities that are beyond any possible regulation by law." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, vol. 6, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 272–73.

[73] Klassen, "Discipleship in Anabaptism and Bonhoeffer," 78.

[74] This is a puzzle for many interpreters, not just Anabaptists. Bonhoeffer's French pacifist friend from America, Jean Lasserre, when interviewed, stated, "Now for me an assassination simply can't flow from the cross and resurrection." Geffrey B. Kelley, "Interview with Jean Lasserre," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 27, no. 3 (1972): 154.

Anabaptism in "anthropocentric" terms "defined by what humans do and not what God does."[75] In the Mennonite reception of Bonhoeffer, this anthropocentric-ethical understanding fills the content of Bonhoeffer's lines on cheap/costly grace and sentences such as "*only the believers obey*, and *only the obedient believe*."[76] Costly grace requires ethical obedience which Bonhoeffer maintains through an exegesis of New Testament texts focused on the Sermon on the Mount, which compliments Bender's distillation of Anabaptism to discipleship, nonviolence, and the voluntary church community.[77] Even as Bonhoeffer's direct writings on ethics in *Ethics* were viewed as problematic defenses of his role in the conspiracy, the call to direct obedience in discipleship was suitable to the *Vision*'s understanding of the Anabaptist life.

In the 1950s as Bender's *Vision* was taught and accepted alongside Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship*, Anabaptist horizons were broadening due to two world wars and their impact in North America and Europe. The Concern Group were a group of younger North American Mennonites in Europe meant to attempt to convince other Christians in Europe of nonresistance. Mostly graduate students in European institutions who were impacted by Bender and others in Goshen, their mission, according to J.L. Burkholder, "was to develop a consistent sectarian theology and a practical polity based upon Anabaptist sectarian principles."[78] They did this by criticizing—in the name of discipleship—the Mennonite institutional structures in North America that they saw as compromising with the world. They first gathered in Amsterdam in 1952—anti-Constantinian, pro-sectarian, and concerned about acculturation of the Mennonite Church—they took up Bender's call of discipleship and referenced Bonhoeffer for this task. Opposing 'responsibility' as a Biblical theme, John Howard Yoder in his inaugural essay, 'The Anabaptist

[75] Paul Martens, "How Mennonite Theology Became Superfluous in Three Easy Steps: Bender, Yoder, Weaver," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 33 (January 2015): 163 n. 9.

[76] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, Paperback Edition, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English 4 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 63.

[77] Yoder also followed this distillation, see especially Paul Martens, *The Heterodox Yoder:* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 3, 25–38.

[78] J. Lawrence Burkholder, "Concern Pamphlets Movement," in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1989.

Dissent' described discipleship as "obedience in ethics […] of primary rank" and equated "responsibility" with the Constantinian "social-ethical position,"[79] referencing "cheap grace" twice for this argument.[80] Bonhoeffer is also mentioned several other times throughout *Concern* publications.[81] For both Bender and the Concern Group, Bonhoeffer's framing of discipleship was useful for their sectarian projects.

Parallel with the *Concern* publications, and with some overlap, were the ecumenical Puidoux conferences of the later 1950s where Bonhoeffer was explicitly discussed. These conferences, according to Donald F. Durnbaugh, were the "first substantial theological dialogues between members of Anabaptist-related churches and mainline Protestants since the sixteenth century."[82] Mennonite historian and sociologist Beulah Stauffer Hostetler writes, "following on the heels of the Nazi holocaust, and the silence of the German state churches, the discussions had a major impact on conference participants. It was the first time in centuries that the sects and the established churches were holding face-to-face dialogue on the issues that concerned them."[83] The first gathering, on August 15-19, 1955 in Puidoux, Switzerland, was intended as a conversation between Peace Church representatives, and mainline protestants were invited as "resource persons and advisors" who eventually "moved directly into substantial and foundational interchange." [84] Durnbaugh even notes that some German "veterans of the Confessing Church, reported that the seriousness and intensity of dialogue there reminded them of the days in 1933-34 when the Barmen Confession was hammered out."[85] At the meeting a discussion on the second day of Oscar Cullmann's "The Kingship of Christ and the Church

[79] John Howard Yoder, The Anabaptist Dissent, Virgil Vogt, ed., *The Roots of Concern: Writings on Anabaptist Renewal 1952-1957* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 29, 32.
[80] John Howard Yoder, The Anabaptist Dissent, Vogt, 34, 39.
[81] In *Concern* 1957 No. 4 by Hebert Klassen, in 1959 No. 7 by Lewis Benson, and in 1961 No. 9 by William Klassen.
[82] Donald F. Durnbaugh, "John Howard Yoder's Role in 'The Lordship of Christ Over Church and State' Conferences," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 77, no. 3 (October 2003): 371.
[83] Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, "Nonresistance and Social Responsibility: Mennonites and Mainline Peace Emphasis, Ca. 1950 to 1985," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 64, no. 1 (January 1990): 54.
[84] Durnbaugh, "John Howard Yoder's Role," 372.
[85] Ibid.

in the N.T." invited a spirited discussion about Bonhoeffer. In response to a reference of Bonhoeffer's distinction in *Ethics* between the 'ultimate' and the 'penultimate,' Mennonite Albert Meyer responded that he "feels that the 'penultimate-ultimate' discussion does not clarify the distinction between the Church and the World, since apparently the Church is supposed to maintain the relation between both the penultimate and the ultimate; he feels that Bonhöffer is not treating Cullman's problem. Yoder objects to saying the Church and the World are 'unmixed and undivided'!"[86] Also in Ernst Wolf's presentation, "Introduction to a Discussion on 'Church and World' with Reference to Luther," Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* is quoted twice.[87] Notable Bonhoeffer colleagues were at the conference, including Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, a German pacifist and mentor to Bonhoeffer in the 1930s ecumenical peace movement, and Jean Lasserre, a French reformed pastor often credited with convincing Bonhoeffer of the applicability of the Sermon on the Mount and therefore of pacifism in 1930-31.

At the July 28-August 1, 1957 meeting in Iserlohn, Germany, Bender and Yoder were there, along with notables Guy F. Hershberger, Clarence Bauman, Peachy, Lasserre, Siegmund-Schultze, and Albrecht Schönherr; the latter was a student of Bonhoeffer's Confessing Church seminary in the mid-1930s. They were among "nearly seventy representatives . . . from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, the United States and England."[88] At this conference, discipleship was a main theme, and Schönherr's presentation, "Leib Christi und Nachfolge bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer," set off a lively debate.[89] Schönherr argued that "the body of Christ" and "discipleship" are central themes in Bonhoeffer's thought but also noted a tension:

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[86] Albert J. Meyer, "Puidoux Theological Conference 15-19 August 1955: Report of the Conference," The Puidoux Series of Theological Conferences on the Lordship of Christ Over Church and State (Puidoux, September 1955), II/17., Mennonite Central Committee 1920-, Europe and North Africa 1940-1970, Peace Section, Puidoux 1955 Reports, IX-19-10 Box 1 Folder 38, Mennonite Church USA Archives, https://palni.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/gopplow/id/4247.

[87] Meyer, III/2.

[88] Hostetler, "Nonresistance and Social Responsibility," 533.

[89] The title translates to "The Body of Christ and Discipleship with Dietrich Bonhoeffer." Later published in Albrecht Schönherr, "Leib Christi und Nachfolge bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Horizont und Mitte: Aufsätze, Vorträge, Reden, 1953-1977* (München: C. Kaiser, 1979), 149–63.

> We will ask ourselves why Bonhoeffer was then able to affirm and help prepare the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944. Bonhoeffer could only see sheer madness at work in the mass murders of Jews, the mentally ill, political prisoners, and opponents of the war, and that was the madness of a single person who tyrannized the others. Bonhoeffer believed that the death of this one would put an end to the madness.[90]

Schönherr agreed with Bonhoeffer's move but was beginning to see that any violence sets off a spark with "unforeseeable consequences."[91] The long discussion centered on Bonhoeffer's thought also raised concerns about the will and command of God and how subjective these are; revelation; concrete action; and Bonhoeffer and Yoder's conceptions of the State, among other things.[92] Yoder's second presentation at the meeting, "Karl Barth and Christian Pacifism" presented a strong criticism of Barth's concept of the *Grenzfall* (borderline situation).[93] In the presentation—which later became his 1970 book *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*[94]—Yoder distinguishes Barth's concept of the borderline situation from Bonhoeffer's. Yoder writes that according to Bonhoeffer and the July 20 plot, you "break the law once in order to straighten it out"[95] but for Barth, "the *Grenzfall* is rather a place where the commandment requires something that seems to us like a contradiction with the baseline of the commandment, but is not a contradiction."[96] Barth himself in 1951 distinguished his own view from Bonhoeffer's. Bonhoeffer "was really a pacifist on the basis of his understanding of the gospel. But the fact remains that he did not give a negative answer to this [tyrannicide]

[90] Albrecht Schönherr, "Leib Christi Und Nachfolge Bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer" (Bericht der zweiten Konferenz, Iserlohn, 1957), 46.
[91] Ibid., 47.
[92] Albert J. Meyer, "Bericht Der Zweiten Konferenz: Iserlohn 28. Juli - 1. August 1957," The Puidoux Series of Theological Conferences on the Lordship of Christ Over Church and State (Puidoux, July 1960), 40–55.
[93] John H. Yoder, "Karl Barth Und Christlicher Pazifismus" (Bericht der zweiten Konferenz, Iserlohn, 1957), https://cdm15705.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15705coll18/id/2837/rec/32.
[94] John H. Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, Studies in Christian Ethics (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).
[95] See Bonhoeffer, *DBWE 6*, 6:272–75.
[96] Yoder, "Karl Barth Und Christlicher Pazifismus," 67.

question."[97] According to Barth the failure of the July 20 plot against Hitler was because "no one was prepared to go through with it in absolute disregard for his own life," and thus "they had no clear and categorical command from God to do it," but also, "it might well have been the command of God. [...] perhaps it was and they failed to hear it."[98] In Barth's seemingly contradictory description, it was difficult to find areas to criticize. These discussions in 1957 between Anabaptists and mainline Christians in Europe show the growing importance and influence of Bonhoeffer in both circles and especially his growing influence on theological ethics. For many, including the Anabaptists, Bonhoeffer's role in the plot against Hitler was a mistake, but it was a mistake that did not diminish what he wrote in *Discipleship*.

Burkholder, Hershberger & Bonhoeffer

For another Mennonite, J.L. Burkholder, Bonhoeffer's ethical reasoning and his role in the resistance was a release. As noted regarding the Concern Group, throughout the 1950s, "social responsibility" was at the forefront of theological-ethical debates, with Reinhold Niebuhr the leading proponent of the view in North America. Burkholder, a "sectarian realist" took Niebuhr's criticisms seriously and found the Goshen school's sectarian and nonresistant position no longer tenable.[99] Burkholder, like others, was deeply influenced by Bonhoeffer's writings and recalled that in the 1950s "it was Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship* that kept me from being turned off by sectarian pride and triumphalism. To me, Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship was terribly attractive, … I nearly memorized the *Cost of Discipleship*, and when I was asked to teach at Goshen College [beginning in 1949], I taught a course on discipleship."[100] In this sense, Burkholder was similar to Bender, but for Burkholder, Bonhoeffer drew him into the world of "responsibility" and put him at odds with the more sectarian views of the Concern Group

[97] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. A. T. Mackay et al., vol. 4, III (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 449.
[98] Barth, 4:449.
[99] This label stems from Burkholder's self-identification in the title of his memoirs, J. Lawrence Burkholder, *Recollections of a Sectarian Realist: A Mennonite Life in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Myrna Burkholder (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2016).
[100] Rodney J. Sawatsky and Scott Holland, eds., *The Limits of Perfection: A Conversation with J. Lawrence Burkholder* (Pandora Press, 1996), 22.

and the *Vision*. Burkholder was influenced by his Princeton teacher Paul Lehmann, another former friend of Bonhoeffer's in the United States. Theron F. Schlabach describes Lehmann as Burkholder's "major professor [...who was] a former student of Niebuhr and member of the Niebuhrian Frontier Fellowship."[101] It is no wonder that Burkholder's thesis, "The Problem of Social Responsibility from the Perspective of the Mennonite Church" would have a strong Niebuhrian character even while Burkholder maintained his pacifism. In the thesis Burkholder also draws favorably from both Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* and *Discipleship*.[102] According to Burkholder, those teaching at Goshen College (including Bender and Hershberger) refused to publish his 1958 doctoral dissertation.[103] After Burkholder left Goshen for Harvard in 1961, he continued to teach a course on discipleship which, he writes, "was probably the best course I taught at Harvard Divinity School. It dealt in part with a dialectic between the sectarian theology in Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, as we read it, and his *Ethics*, [...] which presupposed a political situation and background of responsibility. His whole position was given a new dimension when he entered into the conspiracy to murder Adolf Hitler."[104] Whereas Bender found Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship attractive for formulating a sectarian Anabaptist *Vision* in the 1950s, Burkholder found Bonhoeffer's writings on 'responsibility' in *Ethics* useful for a critique of the former position.

In 1958—the same year that Burkholder finished his thesis—Hershberger, who shared Bender's view of Bonhoeffer and discipleship, published *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*.[105] In one section titled

[101] Theron F. Schlabach, *War, Peace, and Social Conscience: Guy F. Hershberger and Mennonite Ethics* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 2009), 367.

[102] J. Lawrence Burkholder, "The Problem of Social Responsibility from the Perspective of the Mennonite Church" (Th.D., Princeton, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1958), 71, 127, 329, http://search.proquest.com/docview/301886584/citation/525A849A513E4557PQ/1.

[103] J. Lawrence Burkholder, "The Problem of Social Responsibility from the Perspective of the Mennonite Church" (Elkhart, Ind., Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1989), iv; See a criticism of this version of events in Theron F. Schlabach, "Guy F. Hershberger Vis-à-Vis J. Lawrence Burkholder: Irreconcilable Approaches to Christian Ethics?" *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 73, no. 1 (January 1999): 9–34.

[104] Burkholder, *Recollections of a Sectarian Realist*, 126. Maria von Wedemeyer, Bonhoeffer's former fiancé, visited this course.

[105] See Schlabach, *War, Peace, and Social Conscience*, 416–34.

"The Cross Life of the Disciple," Hershberger quotes extensively from across Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*—including one full-page quote—while also editing out Bonhoeffer's negative comments against "enthusiasm" or "fanaticism."[106] These words were common Lutheran pejoratives referring to Anabaptism/Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. Bonhoeffer, referring to what cheap grace means, writes, "Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin. That was the heresy of the enthusiasts, the Anabaptists and their kind."[107] This quote is favorable towards Anabaptism, but Bonhoeffer also warns against disciples that "might adopt an attitude of indifference to this present age, like the fanatics […] Their ideal would then be to withdraw radically and uncompromisingly from the world and by means of force to set up a Christian order."[108] "By force" hints that it is "fanatics" like Thomas Müntzer that Bonhoeffer had in mind, but nonetheless the two quotes point to two ways of viewing Bonhoeffer's text. The latter quote is presumably what helped Burkholder not be "turned off by sectarian pride and triumphalism" in his reading of Bonhoeffer, while Bender and Hershberger focused on the former.

In another section of the text, Hershberger criticizes Niebuhr and notes that Bonhoeffer is used as an example of "limit-cases" in realist ethics.[109] Hershberger again quotes liberally from Bonhoeffer, and again leaves out Bonhoeffer's disparaging remarks about "fanaticism" in that section.[110] Hershberger also provides an overview of the common—including Mennonite—understanding of Bonhoeffer's ethical shift: "No stronger statement than this of the case for nonresistance can be found anywhere; […but] it must be admitted what when the bitter trial came he changed his position. […] During his imprisonment he wrote his *Ethics*[111]

[106] Guy F. Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations* (Herald Press, 1958), 32–36.
[107] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1953, 37–38.
[108] Bonhoeffer, 134; Both quotes have been retranslated in the newest edition, see Bonhoeffer, *DBWE 4*, 44, 146.
[109] Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross*, 106.
[110] Ibid., 124–25.
[111] *Ethics* was actually written before prison.

which represents a different view from that of *The Cost of Discipleship*."[112] For Hershberger, Bonhoeffer was not a case to be emulated, but shows the failure of one to live up to the hard demands of suffering discipleship. In a telling footnote regarding diverging Mennonite views of Bonhoeffer at the time, Hershberger cites a 1953 letter from Burkholder proposing a revisionist reading that "*The Cost of Discipleship*, instead of being accepted at face value, might possibly be interpreted as a wistful retreat into a certain side of Lutheranism which borders on the romantic in which case there would be no basic change in Bonhoeffer's real practical point of view."[113] Here, clearly, are two differing views by Mennonites of Bonhoeffer's life and work. For Burkholder, Bonhoeffer drew him into the world and put him at odds with the Goshen *Vision* and its sectarian impulse, whereas Hershberger viewed Bonhoeffer as ultimately failing in obedience to the call of discipleship.

Conclusion

The impact of Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* on Bender and other Anabaptists has led Mark Thiessen Nation to write that Bonhoeffer "in a manner of speaking, helped twentieth-century Mennonites become 'Anabaptists.'"[114] Once *Discipleship* was translated into English in 1949, Mennonites were immediately reading and teaching from it, while recognizing the complexities of Bonhoeffer's role in the resistance and his *Ethics*. Through the 1950s and 1960s Bender, Burkholder, and Mennonite Brethren Frank C. Peters were all teaching courses on discipleship and ethics to many young students using Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*.[115] Since the 1950s and 1960s, there have also been many more Anabaptist engagements with Bonhoeffer, much of it stirred by A.J. Klassen's efforts in the 1970s.[116] Klassen was the first North American Anabaptist to write a dissertation on Bonhoeffer and maintains that Bonhoeffer came close to an Anabaptist understanding of church during the Finkenwalde time—directly after his interactions with the Bruderhof—and in *Discipleship*, but ultimately remained strongly within the Lutheran

[112] Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross*, 107.
[113] Hershberger, fn. 10, 108.
[114] Nation, *Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis*, 169.
[115] Abe Dueck, "Canadian Mennonites and the Anabaptist Vision," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 13 (1995): 78.
[116] I plan to explore these further receptions in other publications.

tradition. The relatedness of Anabaptism and Bonhoeffer were picked up by Stanley Hauerwas in the early 2000s, and it is with these works where criticisms of "Anabaptist readings" of Bonhoeffer often begin.[117] This essay shows that Anabaptist engagements with Bonhoeffer have a long history, beginning at least in 1949 through various Mennonite writers, thinkers, groups, and conferences. This history helps to make sense of Anabaptist engagements with Bonhoeffer today.

Christopher PW Sundby is an MA candidate at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia and a senior researcher on the Transnational Flows of Agricultural Knowledge Project with the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[117] Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Ada: Brazos Press, 2004); For sustained criticisms see Michael P. DeJonge, "Bonhoeffer's Non-Commitment to Nonviolence: A Response to Stanley Hauerwas," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44, no. 2 (2016): 378–94; Michael P. DeJonge, "Anabaptists and Peace," in *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2017), 142–82.

Trauma, Revenge, and Cycles of Violence in the Exodus Story

Benjamin Bixler

Abstract

The author explores how the violence committed against the people in Egypt as retold in the exodus story becomes a traumatizing event that, in turn, creates a capacity for violence as the community seeks revenge for the initial unhealed trauma. Making connections with the musical *Hamilton*, the author raises concerns about how community is formed by violence as it remembers its foundational story and suggests that an honest understanding of traumatic origins is bound up with efforts to combat ongoing violence.

> This is not a moment, it's the movement.
> Where all the hungriest brothers with something to prove went?
> Foes oppose us, we take an honest stand.
> We roll like Moses, claimin' our promised land.
> And? If we win our independence?
> Is that a guarantee of freedom for our descendants?
> Or will the blood we shed begin an endless
> Cycle of vengeance and death with no defendants?[1]
>
> -Lin-Manuel Miranda, "My Shot," *Hamilton*

> The end result of the biblical exodus event, begun in the book of Exodus, was the violent destruction of the whole nation of people, the Canaanites, described in the book of Joshua…theologians should reflect upon exodus from Egypt as *holistic story* rather than *event*. This would allow the community to see the exodus as an extensive reality involving several kinds of events before its completion in the genocide of the Canaanites and the taking

[1] Lin-Manuel Miranda et. al., "My Shot," *Hamilton Original Broadway Cast Recording*, Atlantic Records, 2015, MP3.

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> of their land. The community would see the violence involved in a liberation struggle supposedly superintended by God.[2]
>
> -Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*

The musical *Hamilton* has become a cultural phenomenon in recent years by asking tough questions of how a national identity founded on violence can lead to an endless cycle of vengeance and death. Its creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, cleverly presents the story of America's founding moments through the story of Alexander Hamilton, while at the same time asking contemporary questions about the colonized state of Puerto Rico, where his parents were born. In listening to the soundtrack, I was struck by how Miranda also alluded to the story of the exodus, tying the character of Moses and Hamilton, and linking the promised land to America. What Miranda does so well is to link the trauma of the loss of Hamilton's parents in his childhood to the tragedy that follows him throughout his life, resulting in the dueling deaths, first of his son and finally of his own. By recognizing that identity is "not a moment, it's the movement," Miranda helpfully reveals that "the blood we shed begin[s] an endless cycle of vengeance and death."[3] This connection between beginnings and ending is what Delores Williams is also pointing to in her evaluation of the exodus as story rather than event. I resonate with Williams' insistence on reading the story of exodus holistically in order to understand how violence and liberation are intertwined. Williams points to the end of the story, focusing on how "the genocide of the Canaanites and the taking of their land"[4] reveals that a liberated people are capable of committing

[2] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 133. Williams uses uppercase "Exodus" to refer to the biblical book and lowercase "exodus event" to point toward the entirety of the exodus story extending beyond the book of Exodus itself to include the conquest narratives in Joshua. I have followed this usage.

[3] Miranda et. al., "My Shot."

[4] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness,*133.

violence in order to maintain that liberation. I am also interested in the beginnings of the story, in the event(s) which lead to the violent destruction of another people at the end of the story. Exploring the death of the young Hebrew boys in chapter 1 as another integral event in the "holistic story" opens questions of how this initial violence has formed the collective identity of the Hebrew people. This formational event gives shape to the identity of the community and highlights the violence done against the community. The resulting trauma of that violence plays a significant role in the violence that the community then enacts throughout the story, most clearly connected to the death of the Egyptians in Exodus 14-15. This community includes both the human and divine characters, as the oppressed community has a divine warrior as its liberator, enacting violence on behalf of the community.

This trauma is related through the parallel narrative images of bodies consumed by the water in the book of Exodus. In chapter 1 the narrative elides mention of the drowned bodies of the young Hebrew boys who are to be thrown into the Nile, an image that finds words in chapter 15 as the Hebrew people celebrate their victory by describing the bodies of the Egyptian warriors sinking down into the sea of reeds. This foundational violence committed against the Hebrew people has shaped who they become. In this paper, I will explore how the initial violence committed against the people in Egypt has become a suppressed traumatizing event that shaped their identity and in turn created the capacity to commit violence as the community seeks revenge for the initial unhealed trauma.

Exodus as constructed memory of a traumatic event

I am reading the exodus as a constructed narrative memory, not as a historical record of events. Robert Warrior argues that narrative functions as a more powerful actuality than history: "history is no longer with us. The narrative remains…Confronting the conquest stories as a narrative rather than a historical problem is especially important given the tenor of

contemporary theology and criticism."[5] As a constructed narrative memory, the exodus story functions to form the identity of the Hebrew people. Ilana Pardes describes the "textual manifestations" of this identity and explores how the biblical text then wrestles with "the fragmentary and slippery quality of memory" in creating identity.[6] Judy Fentress-Williams sees that "remembering is as important as the event itself, if not more important… If this event is central to Israel's identity, then the command to remember and retell is one oriented toward survival."[7] Thus the holistic exodus story, beginning in the book of Exodus and continuing through the conquest and entry into the promised land, functions as an integral component in the self-identity of the Hebrew people, one that allows them to survive the traumatic events in Egypt. Fentress-Williams recognizes that survival is a key component of the narrative of the book of Exodus. Further to this, I ask whether that survival is framed as a healthy response to the trauma that the people endured in Egypt, a response that allows the people to heal from the trauma.

The traumatic nature of the beginning of the exodus story hardly needs detailing, as the people are enslaved by Egypt. Yet, I believe the most significant aspect of the remembrance of that trauma is the absence of describing the foundational traumatic event—the death of the Hebrew boys. The text cannot bring itself to name the destruction of the Hebrew boys, but rather remembers the event only through the decree of Pharaoh in 1:22, where he announces that "All the sons born, you will cast into the Nile." The text does not provide additional details about the results of this decree, does not name the boys who would surely have been thrown into the water,

[5] Robert Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 286, 288. I am reading these texts as constructed narrative memory and exploring narrativized violence. To be sure, the extent of the violence described in Joshua is challenged by historical-critical scholarship, and even by a close reading of the book of Judges. Yet, these questions are not the focus to this article.

[6] Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 3.

[7] Judy Fentress-Williams, "Exodus," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R. Page and Randall C. Bailey (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 80–81. Fentress-Williams goes on to describe the way the story gets re-mixed over time as the story is retold to meet the needs of the community.

and does not linger on this part of the story. This stands in contrast to the first decree of Pharoah in 1:16, when Pharoah tells the midwives Shiphrah and Puah to kill all the boys born to the Hebrew people. In that instance, the text names the rejection of that decree by the midwives and the positive outcome of that rejection, where Shiphrah and Puah are given families by God. In response to Pharoah's second decree to cast the boys into the Nile, the text is silent about the results and instead immediately moves to narrate the birth of Moses, the boy who survives this decree of Pharaoh. Rather than reading about the boys who drown and sink down into the water, the reader is instead told of the boy who floats upon the water, who does not sink down but instead rises up. This gap in the narrative about the fate of those boys who drown in the water points to some of the unresolved and unnamed trauma of the Hebrew people. Their sons, and the future they represent, have been taken from them. Yet because the text elides this trauma, the people cannot mourn the loss and heal. This narrative gap represents the inability of the people to face their trauma.

Trauma theory explains this inability to name trauma in a variety of ways. Pierre Janet is attuned to the ways in which personal narratives often "disguised representations of intensely distressing events which had been banished from memory."[8] Janet names these representations "dissociation" and posits that these dissociations are made when words are inadequate for narrating the trauma. As Bessel van der Kolk summarizes:

> Janet proposed that intense arousal ('vehement emotion') seems to interfere with proper information processing and the storage of information into narrative (explicit) memory. Janet, and subsequent students of this issue, noted that during conditions of high arousal 'explicit memory' may fail. The individual is left in a state of 'speechless terror' in which words fail to describe what has happened. However, while traumatized individuals may be unable to make a coherent narrative of the incident,

[8] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 12. Herman also notes that Freud works with ways in which traumatic stories are told in fragments. While this is a helpful way to understand trauma, for my reading of the narrative gap, Janet's "dissociation" seems more fitting than Freud's fragments, although in a fuller exploration, Freud's work would warrant incorporation.

> there may be no interference with implicit memory; traumatized people may 'know' the emotional valence of a stimulus and be aware of associated perceptions, without being able to articulate the reasons for feeling or behaving in a particular way. Janet proposed that traumatic memories are split off (dissociated) from consciousness…[9]

This inability to name the trauma, yet to have the emotions of the trauma be known in implicit ways was one of Janet's helpful insights. Even as the trauma is not named, the emotive and affective results of that trauma still manifest themselves in the individual. Janet makes a distinction between the implicit memory of "dissociations" and explicit memory which is how other events are stored. Van der Kolk understands that "there is a dramatic difference between the ways in which people experience traumatic memories versus other significant personal events. It supports the idea that [it] is in the very nature of traumatic memory to be dissociated, and to be initially stored as sensory fragments that have no linguistic components."[10] Despite this inability to initially narrate trauma, van der Kolk argues that these traumatic memories are incorporated into explicit memory, into 'ordinary memory' when "people start talking about [the actual imprints of traumatic sensations] and try to make memory of them."[11] But what happens when people do not start talking about their trauma, when that trauma remains unnamed?

Van der Kolk interprets Janet to be saying that while dissociation can be a useful tool for responding to some traumatic events, it too often results in a pathological condition.[12] Thus the death of the Hebrew boys because of Pharaoh's decree in Exodus 1:22 becomes an unnamed trauma, one that is not talked about by the people. This key formational event, the trauma of which becomes part of the self-identity of the Hebrew people in Exodus, has never been added to the explicit memory of the people. Due to the dissociation that has accompanied this traumatic event, the event has not

[9] Bessel A. van der Kolk, "Trauma and Memory," *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 52, no. S1 (September 1, 1998), S101.
[10] Ibid., S102.
[11] Ibid., S106.
[12] Ibid., S101.

been named in the narrative, which has led to a pathological response to the trauma. Van der Kolk describes this pathology as distortions in the stories that are told: "Like all stories that people construct, our autobiographies contain elements of truth, of things that we wish did happen, but that did not, and elements that are meant to please the audience. The stories that people tell about their traumas are as vulnerable to distortion as people's stories about anything else."[13] When combined with Pardes' notion of the exodus account as a biography, I see that implicit traumatic memories are incorporated into the story of the national identity and have become part of the explicit memory, part of the narrative memory, but that this story contains distortions, pathological responses to the unnamed trauma. So, what does it mean to heal from the trauma, to avoid a pathological condition as a result of the trauma?

The concept of trauma healing provides a window into the mechanism by which this unnamed trauma can be resolved. Judith Herman proposes that "Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. *The central task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning* [emphasis added]. The central task of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life."[14] The second stage, that of remembrance and mourning, reveals that if the narrative can't write about trauma in a coherent way (in this case, by incorporating it into the narrative), then how can the community be healed from the trauma? If there is no remembrance of the unnamed trauma of lost children, then there is no mourning of the trauma. Consequently, there is no third stage of the healing, no "reconnection with ordinary life."[15] This is the pathology of the exodus story as the book of Exodus relates it: because the trauma is not named, the task of healthy mourning becomes nearly impossible. In the end, the cycles of violence are what come to dominate the life of the community, rather than a return to ordinary life.[16]

[13] Ibid., S106.
[14] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 155.
[15] van der Kolk, S106.
[16] In my mind, ordinary life has some element of a utopian dream. I don't mean a return to

These cycles of violence come about in part because the community is continually seeking justice for the death of the boys, which still lingers in their implicit memory, in the emotive and affective results of that trauma.[17] Because this particular trauma is a reflection of an injustice, as long as the trauma remains unhealed and disintegrated from the self-narrative of the people, the traumatized people will have a continuing longing for justice, to bring justice to the traumatic event of injustice. Trauma healing is a process of reconciling oneself to the injustice that has been done and no longer seeking justice in retributive ways. Integrating the trauma into the narrative in a way that allows the people to move forward without seeking justice for the unnamed trauma would provide a healthy response. However, the trauma has not been integrated, and to compound the issue, the trauma's omission from the narrative has been reinforced as an unhealthy response and has been ritualized by the community in its ritual practice.

Ritual Practices

Paul Connerton's work with "commemorative ceremonies" sheds light on the ways in which ritual practices come to create identity for a community. Connerton analyzes the phenomenon of ritual practices and argues that these commemorative ceremonies remind the community "of its identity as represented and told by the master narrative…if there is such a thing as

Eden and ease, but an ordinary life of steady existence marked by hard work with some level of safety and security. But maybe between the struggle to supply food and raise children, the unpredictability of the earth, and the threat of other tribes, ordinary life in the cultural setting of the exodus story was simply one of cyclical violence.

[17] Vamik Volkan, *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts*, 1st ed. (Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone, 2006), 108. Volkan's notion of intergenerational trauma supports this point in more detail, but for space constraints, I simply note that Volkan understands that "members of a traumatized society may not be able to fully perform certain necessary psychological tasks, such as mourning their losses. They then 'transfer' such unfinished tasks to the next generation(s) so that their offspring might perform these unfinished tasks for them."

collective memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies."[18] He looks specifically at the exodus story, detailing how "the core of Jewish identity is established by reference to a sequence of historical events," one of which is "the exodus of the Jewish tribes from Egypt."[19] The details of their remembrance is explained by Connerton in this way:

> …'remembrance' becomes a technical term through which expression is given to the process by which practising Jews recall and recuperate in their present life the major formative events in the history of the community…of the major festivals of the Jewish year, Passover is explicitly historical, reminding the people every year of the central event of ancient Jewish history, the Exodus from Egypt as told in Exodus 12. Seder annually reminds practising Jews of the most formative moment in the life of their community, the moment in which that community was redeemed from bondage and made into a free people, and it reminds them of that moment in the form of a home celebration, in which a prominent part in the service is assigned to the child.[20]

In this description of the Seder and remembrance of the exodus story, the unnamed trauma of lost children becomes even more evident. In this commemorative act of remembering the formative event of the Hebrew people, the community involves their living children in the ritual act, while failing to name their dead children, the Hebrew boys lost in Egypt. While there is a celebration of the survival of their own firstborn children on the night of the Passover, the ritual also commemorates the death of the Egyptian firstborn children who are killed during the Passover. This ritualization reveals the extent to which the community has failed to remember the death of their own children in Egypt and is instead focused on the death of the Egyptian firstborn, a violent attempt at correcting the initial injustice of Pharaoh's edict.

Kimberly Stratton also notes how ritual acts serve to establish the

[18] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70–71.
[19] Ibid., 45.
[20] Ibid., 46.

identity of a community. She observes that "Through [the process of memorializing traumatic events], however, the traumatic event can become sacralized—that is, it becomes paradoxically valorized by the community: rather than moving past the traumatic event, the community enshrines it as central to their identity."[21] The traumatic event of the death of their sons in 1:22 is re-enacted throughout the first 15 chapters of Exodus and beyond. This re-enactment can be seen most clearly in chapter 12, where the Egyptian firstborn boys are killed. It also comes to light in the narrative accounts of the death of the Egyptians in the water in chapters 14 and 15. While this re-enactment is essential for the survival of the identity of the Hebrew people, it is based on this original traumatic violence. Stratton summarizes this reality well in this passage:

> It is through this enshrining of past pain and trauma in narrative and ritual practice that violence comes to function as a quintessential aspect of many groups' self-understanding: we are the people who survived this traumatic event, we experienced this cataclysmic persecution and survived. Integral to the story of the violence, therefore, is a complementary narrative of survival, resistance, and endurance. Nonetheless, that sense of victorious solidarity cannot emerge, cannot exist without the defining moment of violence that generated it.[22]

And this unnamed trauma from chapter 1 is what reverberates throughout the rest of the exodus story. It is at the same time the "defining moment of violence" and the unnamed trauma. Paradoxically, it is the controlling force of the text and also absent from the text. Rather than narrate this traumatic event and use the textual memory to work through the pain, the unresolved trauma finds its way back into the narrative. When it surfaces, it takes on elements of revenge, as the people joyfully recount the destruction of the Egyptians in celebratory song and dancing, such as in

[21] Kimberly B. Stratton, "Narrating Violence, Narrating Self: Collective Identity in Early Rabbinic Literature," *History of Religions* 57, no. 1 (August 2017): 69.

[22] Ibid., 70. Stratton also names the intergenerational aspect of this ritualization: "Suffering violence and trauma, thus, tends to have a profound and long lasting impact not only on victims who experienced it, but on subsequent generations who share the memory through its ritualized commemoration and narration" (69).

Exodus chapters 14 and 15.

Exodus as Revenge Fantasy

Within the narrative construction of the book of Exodus, there are certain signposts or markers that connect events. One set of these signposts mark the time that the Hebrew people spent in Egypt by framing that time by death in water, the death of the Hebrew boys, and the death of the Egyptian army. What is the reader to make of these narrative signposts of death in water, which bookend the exodus account of the time in Egypt? In this section, I argue that the text uses these signposts to demonstrate a reversal of the violence done to them in a fantasy of revenge.

The theme of reversal has been noted by many scholars who see points of narrative connection between the beginning chapters of Exodus and chapters 14-15 that reveal the reversal that is apparent in the story. Charles Isbell points out the connection between "at the river's edge" in 2:3 and "at the sea's edge" in 14:30 noting that "this transformation from a place of hiding…to a place of victory signaled by "at the edge of" parallels the development of the story line in general."[23] Nahum Sarna observes that the reeds where Moses is hidden in chapter 2 and the "Sea of Reeds" in chapter 15 are connected, "prefiguring Israel's deliverance at the Sea of Reeds."[24] This image of reeds is extended by Keith Bodner, who argues that

> Exodus 14/15 recounts the surprising reversal and rescue at the Sea of Reeds/Red Sea, even as Exodus 2:3 narrates the placement of the ark by the reeds of the Nile in a more reserved style, and a much quieter providence at work. When the two events are brought together, the reader grasps the larger irony of water in the story, for just as water was the king's means for destroying the future of Israel, so the waters bring Egyptian destruction in chapters 14-15 and silences the voice of Pharaoh that decreed

[23] Charles Isbell, "Exodus 1-2 in the Context of Exodus 1-14," in *Art and Meaning Rhetoric in Biblical Literature.*, ed. David Clines, David Gunn, and Alan Hauser (Sheffield, England: Journal for the Study of Old Testament Press, 1982), 48.

[24] Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel* (New York: Socken Books, 1996), 29.

annihilation for the people.[25]

This theme of reversal is quite clear in the first 15 chapters of Exodus, but much of the focus is on chapter 2 and Moses's story. By shifting the focus toward the end of chapter 1 and the narrative gap between chapters 1 and 2, the theme of revenge becomes clearer.

It is possible to read the parallels between the death of the young Hebrew boys in chapter 1 and the Egyptians in chapters 12 and 14 as a narrative enactment of the ordinance given in Exodus 21:23. This verse speaks to restitution for the death of an (unborn) child, stating that "If harm follows [a miscarriage], then you shall give life for life." The harm done to the Hebrew children in chapter 1 is repaid life for life through the death of the Egyptian first-born in chapter 12 and the death of the Egyptian army in chapter 14. Yet the delight that accompanies the taking of Egyptian life is what causes me to read this text as revenge, rather than simply as reversal or as justice served. Here, I read with Cheryl Kirk-Duggan who understands that "The final hymn celebrates YHWH as deliverer. A womanist reading would challenge the necessity of such horrific bloodshed. For a perspective of candor, how can we interpret such blatant injustice against innocent Egyptians as righteousness?"[26] This moves the story from one of reversal towards revenge fantasy.[27]

This theme of revenge has been noted by Pardes, who focuses on how revenge fantasies are aspects of hero birth myths.[28] This revenge is evident in the story of the birth of Moses as an individual and the birth of the nation of

[25] Keith Bodner, *An Ark on the Nile: The Beginning of the Book of Exodus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 100.

[26] Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, "How Liberating Is the Exodus and for Whom? Deconstructing Exodus Motifs in Scripture, Literature, and Life," in *Exodus and Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Gale A. Yee, Texts @ Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 20.

[27] Other aspects of the narrative also play into this reading as one of fantasy rather than simple reversal. The ways in which Pharaoh is lampooned and manipulated is indicative of characteristics of the genre of revenge fantasy marked by character manipulation and buffoonery. Pharaoh himself is subjected to fantastical thoughts as well, perceiving a threat from the Hebrew children, many of whom are unborn as he is concerned about them.

[28] Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel*, 27–28. Pardes describes the story as "the ultimate revenge" (27) and "something of a slave fantasy…the importance of the moment lies in its carnivalesque spirit, in the reversal of hierarchies. The master falls and the oppressed spring to life" (28).

Israel. Pardes notes this reversal of Pharaoh "who wished to cast the Hebrew babies into the Nile, now finds his soldiers and fancy chariots sinking 'like a stone' in the waters."[29] This ironic reversal[30] between this desire to "cast babies into the Nile" and the destruction by water in chapter 14 becomes more than just simply a reversal of fortunes; it is about the reversal of those with the power to enact the violence.

The revenge theme can also be seen in other elements of the narrative account of the time in Egypt. The plague of the first-born also pays back the Egyptians with the loss of their children. Here the text narrates the pain and anguish of losing children, where "there was a loud cry in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead," (12:30) a cry that was not included in the narrative gap between chapter 1 and 2 in the account of the Israelites losing their sons (although their cry has been heard by Yahweh in 3:7 and 3:9, the text never narrates the source of that cry). By naming the crying of the Egyptians and choosing to give no voice to their own cries, the text highlights the pain of the Egyptians, even delighting in the pain that leads Pharaoh to finally set them free. Finally, as the Hebrew people leave Egypt, they plunder the Egyptians, possibly as a form of reparations for their time in Egypt. While there is no direct connection between the plunder of the Egyptians and the death of the Hebrew children, this detail of plunder adds to the reading of this story as one of revenge.

In addition to the moments of extreme violence in Egypt, the text also functions to enact a "slow violence" on the land of Egypt. Rob Nixon explains slow violence in this way:

> By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions

[29] Ibid., 25–27.
[30] Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 26.

playing out across a range of temporal scales."[31]

Understanding slow violence requires that, as readers, "we complicate conventional assumptions about violence as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is event focused, time bound, and body bound."[32] This is the power of a narrative: it can enact this slow violence and hide its effects from the reader. Nixon points out that "stories—tightly framed for time, space, and point of view— are convenient places for concealing bodies."[33] In the same way that the narrative conceals the bodies of the Hebrew boys in chapter 1, so too do the stories of the plagues conceal the death and destruction that is wrought upon the Egyptians. Nixon examines the long-term impact of wars by examining how land mines and cluster bombs have impacted life in the countries where the wars were waged. In the same way, the aftermath of the exodus event left Egypt devastated, with crops destroyed and eaten, livestock killed, water polluted, and people sick or killed. What were the long-term impacts of the plagues and the death of the Egyptian army in the water? What type of desolate space have the Hebrew people left behind? In many ways, 40 years of wandering in the wilderness seems to be an appropriate accounting for the slow violence that has been enacted on Egypt. This is what Delores Williams tells the reader to take notice of: the ways in which this type of slow violence has effects that come back later in the story.

As the narrative moves beyond Egypt, the violence continues. The pursuit of justice for the unnamed trauma has not been satisfied, and so the community is still caught up in the cycles of violence. Reading the exodus story as Williams suggest, as a "holistic story," shows that the cyclical violence that follows comes as a result of attempts to find closure for the unnamed trauma. But because it is unnamed and unaddressed, the cycles of violence continue. And so, the narrative continues to enact violence, such as the Levites killing other Hebrews in Exodus 32, or the decree to kill Midianite children in Numbers 31,[34] or as the Hebrews enter the Promised Land in

[31] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 2.
[32] Ibid., 3.
[33] Ibid., 200.
[34] Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel*, 147. Pardes notes that in this story, the Israelites

Joshua.[35] Even the promised land itself ironically becomes a threat rather than a promise, based on the report of the spies in Numbers 13:32. The spies return to tell the Hebrew people that "the land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants." For so long have the people been unsettled, living in these cycles of violence that even the land promised to them appears unsafe. Even as they seek safety, which was the first stage of Herman's trauma healing, they retell the story centered on violence.

The need for a community to survive trauma is not to be taken lightly, and yet this re-enactment of the violence never seems to be enough. The cycle of ongoing violence becomes routinized for the people. In turn, this ongoing violence is then institutionalized in ritual acts. This survival is marked by the re-enactment of the violence that is done to the Hebrew people while they are in Egypt through the narrative accounts of the violence that the Hebrew people commit against others as the exodus story unfolds. While the revenge fantasy may function as a form of psychological release of stress and trauma for the people, the larger issue is that its negative effects may outweigh its benefits for identity formation. The failure to name and heal from the initial trauma reveals the pathological nature of the reality that one violence may never be enough to find justice, and that the community will continue to re-enact the violence in order to survive. Thomas Sizgorich speculates that

> rather than preventing the use of violence against members of other communities, some narratives of remembrance recalling dark moments of brutality and suffering visited upon defenseless and innocent [groups] seem to have made it easier for some who imagine their place in the world in accordance with such stories adopt aggressive and even murderous postures with members of other communities.[36]

For me, this raises the question of whether other "narratives of

mirror Pharaoh with the killing of the young boys and sparing the young girls.

[35] Again, historical-critical questions of the violence that takes place are not the focus of this article, but rather the ways in which the narrativized violence in these stories becomes the actuality of violence.

[36] Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 69, cited in Stratton, *Narrating Violence, Narrating Self,* XX.

remembrance" are possible. Are there other ways to narrate the story or other ways to address the unnamed trauma in the narrative gap that may have led to a different identity for the Hebrew people? Must those who find themselves in oppressed situations always view murderous postures, revenge, and violent reversal as their chosen identities?

Non-violent Narrative Responses to Trauma

What would a reading that properly addresses the trauma of loss look like? How might the story have been narrated differently in order to tell the story of loss in a way that brings about healing rather than the perpetuation of violence? Is there a non-violent response to the trauma of loss? To be clear, my main intention is not to make ethical judgments against the Hebrew community for arriving at the decision to imagine violent revolution as a hopeful way to narrate their past. After all, as James Cone reminds us, "the only people who can answer the problem [of the distinction between violence and nonviolence] are the victims of injustice…no one can be nonviolent in an unjust society."[37]

The Hebrew people are indeed the victims of injustice. Bonder notes that Exodus 1:22 and Exodus 14 both "narrate dangerous times for the Israelites with an edict of destruction hovering over them."[38] The response in chapter 2 is to subvert Pharaoh's orders and save the boy Moses. Can the story of Jochebed, Moses' mother, placing him in the water be read as subversive resistance with risk involved, a making of oneself vulnerable in the face of oppression to become free?[39] Does Jochebed's act of resistance to Pharaoh's decree, as well as the acts of the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to an earlier decree, provide a possible counternarrative to the dominant themes of revenge? I tentatively suggest that the self-sacrifice of Jochebed

[37] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 201. This reflects Gilligan's claim that "all violence is the result of injustice."

[38] Bodner, *An Ark on the Nile*, 99.

[39] I am uncomfortable with this line of thinking as it asks the most vulnerable members of the community, in this case a Hebrew woman, to make the greatest sacrifice to bring about freedom. This seems an unreasonable demand to place on someone in a marginalized position. And yet this is the claim that the biblical writers repeatedly make, where in the stories of Esther, Ruth, and Daniel (to name three), those in marginalized positions of some sort are asked to take great risks in order to maintain a people and an identity.

may provide a reading that could counter the revenge narrative by providing hope in the form of subversive resistance. Yet as the narrative unfolds, this subversive resistance no longer seems to be sufficient.

By chapter 14, these actions of Jochebed, Shiphrah, and Puah are no longer sufficient and instead the response to the oppression of the Egyptians is the death of all those Egyptians who are pursuing the Hebrews. In the narrative space between chapter 2 and chapter 14, the people move from subversive resistance to outright rebellion as Yahweh commits violence on behalf of the community. Pixley's observation about liberation is helpful here: "the oppressed themselves must become aware of their oppression and organize to reject it. Under the guidance of Moses this is what happened in Egypt."[40] While the violence is done by Yahweh, the community has sensed that the time has come to fight back, to no longer passively accept their oppression. They have suffered long enough that they are ready for active revolution, to take revenge on the Egyptians for the harm they have inflicted.

Yet, I am left with unanswered questions: Why does the narrative choose to recreate the violence they have suffered for the Egyptians? Why is the revenge fantasy the way in which the narrative shapes their identity? Has the revenge fantasy moved beyond simply seeking justice? Kirk-Duggan realizes that "At the end of the pericope, the Egyptians' firstborn are slaughtered and the remaining soldiers drown by divine edict, divine action. Why does God kill the Egyptians who have nothing to do with Pharaoh's will?"[41] These ethical questions are the problem with imagining a hopeful future, because too often freedom is achieved through unfreedom, as Lyman Sargent observes:

> Hope is essential to any attempt to change society for the better. But this raises the possibility of someone attempting to impose their idea of what constitutes a desirable future on others who reject it. Utopians are always faced with this dilemma when they attempt to move their dream to reality – is their dream compatible with the imposition of their dream; can freedom be

[40] Jorge Pixley, "Liberation Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 161.

[41] Kirk-Duggan, "How Liberating Is the Exodus and for Whom?" 17–18.

achieved through unfreedom, or equality through inequality?[42]

The essential component of this process of building identity for a hopeful future is to name the traumas that have informed the collective identity. This honesty opens up the potential for healing and makes the community aware of the potential they have for inflicting that same trauma on others. In this way, the cycles of violence might be brought to an end.

Conclusion

This revenge fantasy in Exodus 1-15 raises concerns about how the community is formed by violence as it remembers its foundational story. As Delores Williams points out, to appropriate a story without a full understanding of how the story ends (and begins) is fraught with danger. This danger is that the event of the exodus can be co-opted as persons fail to understand where the story ends. Kirk-Duggan echoes Williams' concerns and realizes the harm that can be caused as the exodus event can be claimed by those who go on to oppress others: "Communities have incorporated Exodus for hope and for tyranny, often producing a simplistic reception of the texts amid mainline faith that fails to examine the entire story."[43] Communities would do well to name and address traumas that have shaped them, rather than to allow them to continue on as unnamed trauma.

In the same way that the exodus story reveals the problematic nature of not naming or addressing trauma while seeking the promised land, so too can it illuminate contemporary situations. This is what makes the musical *Hamilton* such a timely work. By connecting the story of Moses with the story of America, it raises the questions of America's unhealed traumas and its troubling history of violence—the genocide as the land was taken, the slavery that sustained the country, and the continued injustice for many segments of the population today. With a history steeped in violent bloodshed, how might American national identity come to have a more honest understanding of its own traumatic origins and cease its ongoing violence? Can the collective country find a way to tell better "holistic stories," to recognize that this is not "a moment" but rather a time to shape "the movement" of a people, and to

[42] Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8.

[43] Kirk-Duggan, "How Liberating Is the Exodus and for Whom?" 27.

create an identity that leads to a place of healing?

Benjamin Bixler is a PhD candidate at Drew Theological School and teaches at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Resisting Apathy and Amnesia: The Significance of Preaching Lament

Eliana Ah-Rum Ku

Abstract

Suggesting that we have lost a place to speak of suffering by too easily bringing up forgiveness and reconciliation, the author argues for a renewed focus on the liturgical and theological language of lament. Through an examination of the language of lament both in the book of Lamentations and in the voices of so-called Korean "comfort women" the author suggests ways that lament can function in preaching to avoid the dangers of apathy and amnesia.

The Structure of Apathy and Amnesia

The need for dealing with suffering has presented itself to preachers in every era. Experiences of suffering caused by violence, natural disasters, war, discrimination, disease, and death have left numerous scars on the human mind and body. Although there have been many studies of suffering in homiletics, theologians and ministers have been unable to offer an adequate explanation or interpretation of suffering. This is because suffering is not fully understood in the human sphere due to its complexity and ambiguity. This inexplicableness often leads preachers to jump to premature hope.[1] Pain is not attractive, and preachers tend to pursue what is good. Kathleen M. O'Connor diagnoses this as denial culture.[2] Preachers are often tempted to say "forget it" in response to suffering, which is known as denial, and to "walk

[1] Nancy J. Duff, "Recovering Lamentation as a Practice in the Church," in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, eds. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 3-4; See also Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 52, and J. Clinton MaCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 85; Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 118.

[2] Katheleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentation and the Tears of the World* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 91-94.

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around" the situation by ignoring the tension, conflict, and pain it causes.[3] Over the last two decades, the temptation to deny suffering has possibly become even worse due to growthism and triumphalism, while making a blind or urgent proclamation of hope. Luke Powery points out, "I know we've been coopted by the capitalistic principalities and pristine powers of prosperity-gospel preaching, naming it and claiming it, a bigger house and a bigger car and a bigger bank account."[4] 'Good news' is so easily proclaimed. Unhappiness and sin, which make people uncomfortable, quickly disappear from sermons. Then the preacher says, "Sure we have our faults, but the good news is, God loves us anyway."[5] Michael Horton recognizes this pattern in American preaching, saying, "'Smooth talk and flattery' (Rom. 16:17-18) is part of the staple diet of successful American religion today."[6]The tendency to avoid and forget suffering is not confined to socio-cultural or theological discourse, but rather seems to be deeply ingrained in everyday life. Although her argument does not apply to all households, Alice Miller discovered a pattern in European and American parenting styles: "You really should try to stop complaining all the time…Try and forget…Anger is dangerous. It causes headaches…You must try and control your behavior…Everyone has had to live with injustice at some time or another."[7] Miller argues that children's pain is hidden and locked in their bodies and minds.

Certainly, in some sermons, efforts have been made to deal effectively with suffering. Nonetheless, some sermons emphasizing social justice overly focus on ethical aspects of suffering, like that found articles of a newspaper, excluding the redemptive action of God's response to suffering. Other sermons glorify suffering due to a misguided application of Christ's crucifixion. This can create unsuitable guilt in the congregation by focusing too much on repentance to resolve national catastrophes or social suffering.

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[3] David J. Schlafer, *What Makes This Day Different?: Preaching Grace on Special Occasions* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1998), 133.

[4] Luke A. Powery, "My God, My God, Why?" preached on Good Friday, March 29, 2013, at Duke Chapel.

[5] Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2008), 69-70.

[6] Ibid, 66.

[7] Alice Miller, *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence: The Liberating Experience of Facing Painful Truth*, trans. Simon Worrall (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 22-23.

We have lost a place to speak of suffering by easily bringing up forgiveness and reconciliation, have been selective in accepting images of God in the Bible, and have been reluctant to mention the powerful existence of evil.

Thus, this paper focuses on forming a liturgical and theological language to effectively deal with suffering rather than attempting to interpret or explain suffering. Exploring how people express their suffering through the Book of Lamentations—a book that reflects the pain and sorrow of the destruction of Jerusalem—will help to form the language of lament which is often overlooked. Also, the voices of Japanese Military Sexual Slaves in Korea will allow us to discover the power of lament. Based on these voices, we will probe how lament can function in preaching to resist apathy and amnesia.

The Language of Lament in the Book of Lamentations

Suffering in the Book of Lamentations

It is estimated that the Book of Lamentations was written in the period from 587/86 to 520 B.C.E., which dates to shortly after the fall of Jerusalem.[8] Although it is doubtful that the images of Lamentations have a direct correlation to the historical event of the destruction of Jerusalem, it is conceivable that the Book of Lamentations responds to the pain and loss caused by the fall of Jerusalem.[9] The Book of Lamentations is full of the voices of suffering; as Walter Brueggemann says, "The poems in the book of Lamentations give full expression to loss."[10] However, those voices of suffering were ignored for a long time.

Approaches to Lamentations during the Patristic and Medieval periods can be summarized in two ways: prophecy about and suffering of Christ; and the spiritual formation of the Christian. Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon, and Tyrannius Rufinus, a monk and theologian, link the experience of suffering in Lamentations to the experience of Christ in the crucifixion.[11]

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[8] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic evidence for the date of Lamentations," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 26 (1999): 36.

[9] Ibid., 4.

[10] Walter Brueggemann, *Reality, Grief, Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 69.

[11] Saint Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Kindle Edition, (London: S.P.C.K., 1920), 856, 1698; Philip Schaff, ed., *Selected Library Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of Christian Church (NPNF)* 2, vol. 3 (New York: The Christian Literature Company / Oxford and London: Parker & Company, 1890-1895), 553.

Gregory Nazianzen seeks to show the consequences of a wrongful life through Lamentations.[12] Origen of Alexandria also interprets the suffering in Lamentations as the result of sin.[13] The city in Lamentations is portrayed as a wife abandoned by her husband because of her vicious behavior.[14] The ruins of Jerusalem in Lamentations 4 are compared to a loss of holiness, and lament is understood as a means of washing away evil.[15] This interpretive tradition continues with the Reformers. Calvin recognized God's wrath and vengeance as justified and read Lamentations as a book calling for repentance.[16] The agony of the destroyed Jerusalem was presented to the congregations as a painful example of the consequences of disobedience.[17] The dominant interpretation of sin and judgment continued to 1990. In particular, the 1950s-1980s were dominated by debates related to theodicy, and efforts were made to explain God's violent actions and the reasons for suffering.[18] The part of hope in the third poem was regarded as a theological center and suffering was understood to serve a divine purpose.[19]

At the start of the 1990s, the focus of interpretation shifted to the suffering voices of Lamentations that appeal to the reality of suffering rather than asking about the causes of suffering. Scholars in the 1990s began to focus on Daughter Zion's painful voice in chapters 1-2. As part of a wider variety of commentaries on Lamentations beginning in the 2000s, including feminist, psychological, post-colonial, ethical, and literary interpretations, some scholars read Lamentations as a way to resist apathy and amnesia against suffering.[20] Tod Linafelt regards Lamentations as an ancient example of surviving literature.[21] Linafelt claims the language of suffering as an

[12] *NPNF* 2, vol. 7, 272.
[13] Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (New York: Rutledge, 1998), 75.
[14] Ibid., 69-70.
[15] *NPNF* 2 vol.12, 610, 699.
[16] John Calvin, *Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations* vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009), 442.
[17] Ibid., 623.
[18] Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1954), 51.
[19] Ibid., 53.
[20] Heath Thomas, "A Survey of Research in Lamentations (2002-2012)," *Current in Biblical Research* 12, no.1 (2012): 9.
[21] Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a*

expression of truth and a condition of truth for the survivors.[22] Linafelt criticizes three prejudicial interpretations of Lamentations from the early fathers, the medieval era, and the modern era in connection with the third poem of Lamentations.[23]Linafelt offers strong criticism that these prejudices downplay and expunge the language of sorrow and pain in Lamentations.[24] Dobbs-Allsopp resists one specific theological or dominant claim. Dobbs-Allsopp argues that the book helps the voices honestly express the oppression and pain in the face of God's silence.[25] Lamentations delays and reverses the corrosive action of the language of the traumatized through the recovery of grief language and through the vocalization of suffering experiences.[26] Kathleen O'Connor considers Lamentations in light of the theology of witness. She argues that Lamentations is "A house for sorrow and a school for compassion, it teaches resistance, liberates passions, and gives us prayers for the world's tears."[27] These scholars emphasize the language of suffering that has been disenfranchised in the discourse on Lamentations, pointing out that the act of speaking the experience of suffering in Lamentations is important.

Lament in Lamentations 5:19-22

When interpreters focus on speaking out about suffering in Lamentations, the last verses which express deep despair and silence can be understood as a desperate plea of a community for deliverance from suffering, not repentance of their sin or praise of God. This insight prepares us to interpret the hopelessness expressed in the ending of Lamentations 5:19-22. With the eyes of sufferers, verse 19 may not be praise and verse 21 may not be hope for restoration. For this, rather, referring to the mighty God can be seen as a challenge to God who has seemingly forgotten, forsaken, and utterly rejected the sufferers, which comes in the next verses.

Claus Westermann does not understand verse 19 entirely as praise. In

Biblical Book (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1-2.
[22] Ibid., 1-2
[23] Ibid., 5.
[24] Ibid., 2.
[25] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002), 30.
[26] Ibid., 33.
[27] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 86.

the relationship with verse 20, he notes a great distance between suffering humans and the eternal God who dwells in heaven and does not care about human suffering.[28] Dobbs-Allsopp also emphasizes the spatial separation between God and people.[29] Unlike the first Isaiah or Zechariah who saw the vision of God fighting for the city's final salvation, the poet of Lamentation cannot (yet) see the future of the city and the temple.[30] Verse 19 may be considered to be hope for Judah, but the hope is shattered by the rejection of God in verse 20. Despite the speakers crying out to God to look and remember their pain, God has seemingly forgotten them and turned away from them.[31] Verse 21 looks like the last struggle. People want to be forgiven by God and to go back to the divine embrace, but they cannot do it by themselves. It is not an attitude that is simply passive. This prayer is a confession that our lives depend on God, even at the end of despair when God does not fully respond. It is the cornerstone of God's actions.[32] However, again, the last verse may shatter the expectation of verse 21.

The interpretation of the last verse has been controversial because of the first word, *kî ´im*. One of the primary reasons scholars have not agreed is that scholars do not want to interpret verse 22 as words of total despair which understand God's silence as abandonment. The word *kî ´im* can be separated into two words, not an idiom, "for if."[33] When these two words are considered separately, this phrase can be translated as "then," which is the word that comes after the conditional clause. However, these interpretations are criticized by those who say that the second colon does not really state the consequence of the first, but rather restates it. Adel Berlin argues this translation is too modern for the ancient author because in Jewish tradition, in public recitation when a book ends on a negative note, the custom is to repeat

[28] Claus Westermann, *Lamentations (*Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 216.
[29] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations,* 148.
[30] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "R(az/ais)ing Zion in Lamentations 2," in *David and Zion*, eds. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 47.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 53-54.
[33] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations,* 60. Linafelt suggests the translation of verse 22 as an open ending. He uses '…' instead of a period at the end of the book of lamentations. He argues it is the poetry's rejection to move beyond lament and the book of lamentation remains incomplete.

the penultimate verse.[34] Lain Provan states that the attempt to understand *kî ´im* as two words destroys the parallelism of the verse.[35] Additonally, Septuagint, Old Latin versions, and Syriac versions seem to ignore or remove the particle *im* unlike MT and understand the start of the last verse as "for."[36] This can be a more positive translation; however, it is criticized as not being logically correct in relation to verse 21 because the clause following *kî ´im* presents a condition which should be accepted before the previous negative sentence can be "Not A, unless."[37] Another option is to read the colon as an interrogative, although it is not a literal rendering: "Or have you rejected us, are you indeed so angry with us?"[38] Robert Gordis argues *kî ´im* carries the meaning "even if, although," citing Isaiah 10:22, Jeremiah 51:14, and Amos 5:22.[39] However, Westermann criticizes it, claiming that "Yahweh's wrath is hardly something in the past; it is still working itself out in their midst."[40] Berlin and Delbert Hillers read *kî ´im* as "but instead" in a restrictive sense. However, Linafelt refutes them, claiming that "*kî ´im* is used as an adversative conjunction only when preceded by a negative, either explicit or implied, which is not the case with v. 21."[41] In addition, "but instead" is the end of the most hopeless and unreliable situation. This is because the cry for making us turn to God even if God refuses us means that no matter how the sufferers enter the land, the land without God will be rejected by God. There can be a physical going home, but there is no comfort and restoration. When comparing this with Genesis 32:27, many versions translate this phrase as

[34] Adele Berlin, *Lamentations* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002), 125-126.
[35] Lain Provan, *Lamentations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 133.
[36] R. Schäfer, "Lamentations," in *Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ): Megilloth* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), 136. Robert B. Salters, *Lamentations: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 373.
[37] Delbert Hillers, *Lamentations* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 160.
[38] Westermann, *Lamentations,* 211. Westermann affirms two versions: "Or have you totally rejected us?" or "unless you have totally rejected us."; Provan, *Lamentations,* 132.
[39] Robert Gordis, *The Song of songs and Lamentations: A Study, Modern Translation and Commentary* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974),198; Robert Gordis, "The Conclusion of the Book of Lamentations (5:22)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no. 2 (1974): 291-92.
[40] Westermann, *Lamentations*, 218.
[41] Tod Linafelt, "The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001): 341.

"unless" (NSA, NAU, NET, NIV, NJB, ESV).[42]

When preachers focus on the voice of suffering, interpreting *kî ʹim* as "unless" gives preachers important points. This translation includes the possibility of God's redemptive action without losing the desperate plea of those who stand on the edge of a precipice. "Unless" allows a demand that God pay attention to people's pain, but it does not force hope. This translation offers a situation of "very unsettledness" and prepares room for lament that is "neither denied nor overcome with sentimental wishes, theological escapism, or premature closure."[43] Their painful language neither shrinks nor is indestructible. This appeal is never soft because they are in unbearable pain—their groaning is urgent, powerful, and provocative. In addition, the incomplete clause of verse 22 lets readers imagine the possibility of the future being different than the present.[44] Divine silence has multilayered meanings beyond absence and rejection. The silent God can mirror people's apathy and amnesia about suffering. God's silence may be an intentional and theological decision to honor the voice of pain. The absence of God's voice invites the voices of deep sorrow and despair to the dialogue. God allows people to fully hear suffering voices. That is because even a single word of God mentioned at the end of the voice of suffering will easily solve human suffering, dampen anger and despair, and make the human broken condition pass into healing.[45] Thus, lament of the final verses reveals, "Israel may despair; but it refuses amnesia" and apathy.[46] Lamentations can be considered as a space keeper of a lamenting voice, giving the interpretive image of a listening God.

The Language of Lament in the Narratives of Korean "Comfort Women"

Suffering of "Comfort Women"

"Comfort women" is the name given to military sexual slaves, girls and women from the Japanese-occupied countries during World War II, most of whom were Korean. There were more than 400 rape centers that had 200

[42] Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations,* 197.
[43] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 78-79.
[44] Linafelt, "The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations," 343.
[45] O'Connor, *Lamentation and the Tears of the World*, 86.
[46] Walter Brueggemann, *God, Neighbor, Empire: The Excess of Divine Fidelity and the Command of Common Good* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 17

000 "comfort women." The system existed at the beginning of the Asian-Pacific War following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931.[47] Korean "comfort women" were forcibly mobilized through employment fraud, kidnapping, intimidation by public authorities, and human trafficking.[48] A colonial policy to obliterate the Korean nation in the 1930s made all Koreans the servants of Japan, annihilating the Korean language, culture, spirit, traditions, and Korean way of life. The Japanese Empire exploited the lives and bodies of Koreans, especially girls, for its own prosperity, then disposed of them. "Comfort women" were systematically and sexually exploited and were not considered human even after death. They were killed and dumped by Japanese soldiers like a pack of garbage.[49] The suffering of "comfort women" reflects another complex and extreme form of oppression and violence in Korean contexts.[50]

According to the testimonies of Korean survivors, most of these girls and women came from extremely poor families with little formal education. The high level of poverty among Koreans during the Japanese colonial period was then coupled with sexual slavery during the period of war exploitation. Also, because neo-Confucian Korean society valued female chastity, politically and culturally conservative Koreans treated the survivors of "comfort women" as prostitutes. The "comfort women" were portrayed as victims who had "dirty" bodies covered with shame and guilt. They lived in hiding, in fear that their experience at the comfort facilities would be discovered and, as a result, that they could not be re-incorporated into their family systems but would be forced to live a marginalized existence.[51] "Comfort women" were considered to be passive, fragile, pitiful victims whose

[47] Keun-Joo Christine Pae, "Factory Girls and 'Comfort' Girls: A Feminist Theo-Ethical Reflection on Korean Girl Soldiers in Japanese Empire," in Female Child Soldiering, Gender Violence, and Feminist Theologies, ed. Susan Willhauck (Macmillan, Parlgrave, 2019), 117.
[48] Ibid.
[49] In September 1944, when the defeat was imminent, Japanese soldiers stationed in *Songshan* and *Tengchong*, China, shot 30 Korean "comfort women" in *Tengchong* Province on the night of September 13, as recorded by the 54th Army of the U.S.-China coalition. Eunjoo Nam, "The First Video of the Japanese Military's Massacre of 'Comfort Women' was released," *The Hankyoreh,* February 27, 2018. https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/area/area_general/833978.html
[50] Pae, "Factory Girls and 'Comfort' Girls," 115-116.
[51] Sung Hee Choi, "Translation Shifts of Patriarchal Ideology on 'Comfort Women'," *English & American Cultural Studies* 16, no. 4 (2016): 186.

virginity had been trampled on and whose lives had not been protected. The issue was regarded as a mark of national shame and a reminder of the country's powerlessness.[52] To add to their oppression, the experiences of war of these uneducated and poor girls were generally excluded from public discourse on war, security, and peace.[53]

Lament of "Comfort Women"

For decades, there was no formal backdrop against which to explore the terrible suffering of "comfort women" until Kim Hak-soon broke the silence on August 14, 1991 at Osaka, Japan as a witness and her spoken memories broke through the apathy and amnesia.[54] Her voice had been locked in silence for over 50 years. It took a lot of effort to break the apathy and amnesia, even after the international community redefined "comfort women" as Japanese military sexual slaves which occurred only after South Korean female leaders and survivors brought the "comfort women" issue to the United Nations in 1992.[55] Patriarchal culture, social indifference, and universal concealment made it impossible for survivors to speak out about their suffering. Although the issue of "comfort women" has now been discussed internationally, the women continue to be portrayed as weak and passive victims, not the agents of serious discourse.[56] Nonetheless, survivors have started to speak out about the nightmare which they had previously wanted to forget. Rejecting the apathy and amnesia of Korean and international communities, 'comfort women' have now been exposing their shame publicly.

13-year-old, to a naked and exhausted body
When military boots attack like a bomb shell…
Without time to weep bitterly…

[52] Hyunah Yang, "Re-membering the Korean Military Comfort Women: Nationalism, Sexuality, and Silencing," in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, ed. Chungmoo Choi and Elaine H. Kim (New York: Routledge, 1998), 130-35.
[53] Ibid., 111.
[54] See Choe Sang-Hun, "Overlooked No More: Kim Hak-soon, Who Broke the Silence for 'Comfort Women,'" The New York Times, October 21, 2021.
[55] For more details, refer to UN Doc. E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1, January 4, 1996. http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/commission/country52/53-add1.htm
[56] Choi, "Translation Shifts of Patriarchal Ideology on 'Comfort Women,'" 170.

Because my womb became decayed
Alas! I cannot be a mother and a wife!
Alas! I cannot bear to see my home and parents.
hide in day, breath in night…

Whose rough conspiracy was my life pushed into an incineration plant of history?

Please, someone remember.
This clot of blood that reaches to the sky
Will fly to the land that trampled me
Will become lava and volcano
Will spout every day.[57]

Raising their voices involved a very harsh process for the survivors. A survivor lamented her unbearable pain.

I lived so harshly.
I think my heart is burning when I try to say what's deep inside me.
Like in a dream,..like in a fog...
I cannot remember, I cannot remember, It has gone into deep (of my heart).
What my life is!…Alas! Alas! How awful…![58]

Survivors continue to speak out to bear witness to their painful memories, despite the temptation to forget.[59] They are honestly and bravely naming the pain. Comfort women's lament as truth-telling has gone beyond expressing their suffering; it has become a way to resist oppression and to empathize with the suffering of others, leading to women's human rights in Korea and

[57] Jung Ja Gwon, "Military Sexual Slavery's Secret History 3," (Aug. 15, 2012), Last accessed August 17, 2021. https://blog.naver.com/dramo23/164171497.
[58] Myeong Hye Kim, "Incomplete Stories," *Korea Cultural Anthropology* 37, no. 2 (2004): 15.
[59] Flora A. Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 36.

providing encouragement for women war survivors in other countries to speak about their experiences as well. As a result of this sharing by survivors, the Korean community began to mourn the truth and pain of the military sexual slaves. Truth-telling became a way to resist an environment of prettying up and concealing the pain caused by unjust power.

In the 1990s, as the country was becoming politically and economically stable, Korea began a wide ranging and more aggressive approach to war litigation, including for the "comfort women."[60] Each group of survivors practiced lamentations as resistance against apathy and amnesia and began to bring their sufferings to the public platform and to form networks throughout the international community. Like the voice of the fifth poem in Lamentations, there have gradually been voices that began to feel empathy. Also, laments have played a critical role in connecting the memory (which is the memory of the generation who suffered) and post memory (which is the memory of the next generation who received it).[61] Solidarity for dealing with the "comfort women" issue has made a historical contribution to the history of international human rights by advancing women's rights; and the issue reveals the truth of suffering to the entire international community.[62]

Silence can present a stronger message than speaking when silence is perceived as an action. However, if silence is formed in a coercive and oppressive way between different power statuses, speaking out can be a powerful act of resistance against unjust coercion. "Comfort women" faced apathy and amnesia by Korean and international communities before their suffering developed solidarity and a communal voice.[63] Therefore, lament cannot be separated from communal practice that forms the solidarity of

[60] Soon-Won Park, "The Politics of Remembrance: The Case of Korean Forced Laborers in the Second World War" in *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean experience,* eds. Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang (New York: Routledge, 2007), 60.

[61] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 23. Postmemory is distinguished from memory in terms of distance between generations and is also distinguished from history in terms of personal relevance. Hirsh has developed this concept in relation to the children of Holocaust survivors.

[62] Seong-Phil Hong, "The Saga of the Japanese Wartime Sexual Slavery: A Noble Search for Human Dignity by the Korean Female Victims," *The Justice* 102 (2008): 218.

[63] Shin, "The Task of Korean Theology in View of Postcolonial Feminism," 248.

suffering, and the voice as resistance is reinforced within the communal lament.

The process of finding the voices of "comfort women" involved recalling memories and recovering testimonies that served as resistance to the complex injustices inflicted upon them. The power of lament enabled "comfort women" to have interpretive subjectivity in a social and historical sense. With reclaimed voices, "comfort women" knew they could "come into the truth of one's history corporately and individually, recover one's life, acquire moral agency by naming one's world."[64] They could take off the pure and passive image externally given, define themselves, become the subject of their own voices, and invite people to their lament.

To Carry on the Language of Lament in Pulpits

The Right to Lament in Pulpits

Divine silence in Lamentations can justify hearing the voice of suffering from the pulpit. The silent God makes space for the voice of Jerusalem to be respected as God gives up God's voice. God's silence gives authority to the painful voice in the dialogue, revealing the interpretive image of a God who listens and participates in human suffering. The interpretation of the radical voice of communal lament, which is a powerful plea and invites God as a participant in their suffering, resists the single-axis view of sin and despair, and holds the potential for God's salvation without losing the reality of suffering. In other words, lament does not mean challenging or denying God in a sermon, but rather it creates a space for sorrow, allows the sorrow to be heard, and lets listeners meet the listening and lamenting God who goes to the cross to respond to human suffering as an important language of the gospel.

The voices of "comfort women" also support the significance of lament in preaching. Their voices reveal the role and importance of lament in society beyond the Christian community. "Comfort women" have resisted the dominant and oppressive discourse by witnessing and remembering their suffering. In this space for remembering and revealing suffering, they have created a communal voice as a way to resist the structure of oppression. Giving voice to the deep scars of pain may bring the possibility of recovery.

[64] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 83.

The recurring voices allow listeners to feel empathy; thus, such lament can encourage others to respond to the suffering of the world.

A preacher can use her voice for and with those who can't help but be silent.[65] Preaching has been called upon to take more seriously the systems and structures that suppress the voices of suffering. Alongside the voices of the Bible, churches, ethnic groups, social institutions, and civic groups, preaching can contribute to a dialogue among communities.[66] Practicing lament is to value the expression of suffering and give people the opportunity to participate in true expressions of pain, sorrow, guilt, anger, joy, and chaos.[67] Thus, lament voices in a liturgical setting play a critical role in the retention of memory and witnesses, opening the possibility for healing.

The Language of Lament for Resisting Apathy and Amnesia

Apathy often takes the form of "don't ask, don't tell."[68] It blocks one from facing suffering and it resists the abyss.[69] Christine Smith points out that while many religious communities acknowledge the reality of violence, the church has been painfully silent about certain expressions of violence.[70] However, the language of lament can break apathy and allow preachers to courageously select the concrete expressions of suffering to mirror the reality of suffering. Bearing witness to suffering is to disclose the reality of suffering rather than to focus on the cause of suffering or interpret the meaning of suffering so that listeners can face the gravity of the truth; preachers may invite the listeners into "pain, chaos, and brutality, both human and divine."[71] The language of lament resists "the silence of moral indifference, justification, and betrayal in the lives of perpetrators…powerlessness."[72] Thus, expressing anger at and resistance to injustice and suffering through preaching is to

[65] Mary Lin Hudson and Mary Donovan Turner, *Saved from Silence: Finding Women's Voice in Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 15.
[66] Ibid., 135.
[67] Ibid., 136.
[68] Walter Brueggemann, *Disruptive Grace* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 133.
[69] Ibid., 137.
[70] Christine M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 74.
[71] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 94.
[72] Ibid., 83.

show the listener that lament language as a witness is not the epitome of sin or disobedience, but another expression of faith and a way of survival.[73] Also, lament as witness may tell listeners, including the preacher, that we are no longer alone in our suffering and that our suffering can be opened up, accepted, and healed.[74] Practicing lament gives people the power to shatter the shame surrounding unjust suffering. The community becomes a common witness to suffering and this can help bring tears to the surface.[75]

Lament as a witness of pain refuses to deny the truth of suffering or to let people turn their eyes away from stories of pain. Lament allows us to re-narrate and re-describe what has been done to sufferers so that others can share the depth of their pain. The suffering narrative itself can be powerful. Preachers may find unconceded, unshared, and uncomfortable sadness. "Preaching allows sadness and anticipated sorrow and grants the right to the sorrow we embrace and feel. It is to have sorrow."[76] In the very heart of God, there is always the right of the weak who are oppressed, and God is deeply concerned about their suffering (cf. Dt 10:18; 14:29; 16:14; 24:17-21; 27:19). Thus, preachers have a responsibility to pay attention to human suffering in accord with the pathos of God.

Memories go beyond past-oriented recollections and are used as a signifier of the present progressive truth.[77] Memories are repressed and sometimes lost due to the falsehood that results from amnesia. Although private memory can respond to institutionalized and selective oblivion, the private memories of sufferers are fragmented and not publicized because an appropriate advocator or spokesperson is not found.[78] Sometimes private memories are overwhelmed by the depth and magnitude of pain and refuse to be expressed. However, when private memory rejects amnesia and is activated, a counter-memory confronts public memory formed by one

[73] Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance*, 82.
[74] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 95.
[75] Brueggemann, *Disruptive Grace,* 130.
[76] Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipatory Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 69.
[77] Jin-Sung Chun, "Beyond Politics of Memory toward Cultural History of Memory: A Methodological Critique of Korean Memory Studies," *Critical Review of History* 76, no. 3 (2006): 452.
[78] Ibid.

dominant frame.[79] Thus, it is effectively a struggle for preachers to bring excluded and silenced voices into a sermon. However, this fragmented and repressed memory becomes a channel not only to express disenfranchised suffering but also to access other voices of pain.

The multiple voices of suffering are positioned as the agent of lament and expect to find solidarity with listeners, including God, beyond the stage of being represented through the preacher. Through this multi-voice dynamic, a communal memory can be formed. To be specific, the voices of "comfort women" were not a communal memory but were private memories suppressed in history as a subordinate and ignored discourse. However, when these voices, as subjects of memory, refused to give up speaking their painful memories and did not passively accept the false public memory—which was formed by imperial and peripheral hegemony—their private memories became a communal memory lamented by those who participated in this mutual suffering and itself became history. Rather than trying to find hope in Lamentations, when preachers respect the various voices that come from suffering and read Lamentations through the private and counter-memories that come from the authority of experience, out of the Deuteronomic memory that presents the sin-judgment frame, Lamentations mirrors numerous fragmented and unnamed sufferers and makes them lament together. Furthermore, Lamentations can urge readers "to face suffering, to speak of it, to be dangerous proclaimers of the truths of nations, families, and individuals."[80] The community of Lamentations 5 continues to lament, which does not end in verse 22. The lament gathers the suffering of the world and ensures that it is not forgotten. The listeners learn to resist amnesia.

Lament preaching as memory neither unifies the memories of pain nor reduces them to an idealized discourse. Rather, it pursues a language in which people are open to each other. This openness creates solidarity while respecting the stories of individual pain. Lament preaching as memory provides a place for congregations to hear others' sorrows and weep together by participating in the stories of others, rather than appropriating others' memories in their own way.

[79] Ibid., 456.
[80] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 94-95.

Lament After Lament

"Suffering makes us mute."[81] Pain creates a place in the soul that deals with material loss. Pain can isolate sufferers.[82] Pain is not attractive but threatening, and the powerful force of sorrow's infectiousness makes people uncomfortable.[83] Hatred, anger, and sadness are placed in the power of avoidance and rejection in a syndrome of indifference and forgetfulness.[84] However, the Bible wants to speak not just about the good parts of life but about all parts, including pain, scars, and weakness. Also, the reality of darkness still exists until the eschaton. This déjà vu of pain is in any place and any age; those who suffer are full of the "honest cry of darkest despair."[85] The voices of Lamentations and "comfort women" have shown that suffering needs to be exposed for the oppressed to regain their egos, have their voices, and become true moral agents.[86] Thus, preachers face a challenge to not give up speaking out for and with suffering in the world and a challenge to refuse "to retreat from the relationship with God or relationship with its audience, even as it is described as desolate and voices its anguish."[87] To pursue it, preachers can draw on lament as a central part of biblical faith and devotion, just as the gospel portrays the suffering of Christ by including grief in the language of preaching. "The resurrection of the church begins with lament."[88]

Lament is not the end of suffering. Rather it challenges the ones in terrible pain to take a stand against their history, count on God's forgiveness and help, and to take courage and start a new life in communion with God.[89]

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[81] Phil C. Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow: A Pastoral Theology of Suffering* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 71.
[82] Ibid., 71.
[83] Ibid., 93.
[84] Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 2015), 116.
[85] Kristin M. Swenson, *Living Through Pain: Psalms and the Search for Wholeness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 140.
[86] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 89.
[87] Pat Dutcher-Walls, "Sorrow Like My Sorrow," preached at Epiphany Chapel in Vancouver on Nov 10, 2016.
[88] Emmanuel M. Katongole and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith after Genocide in Rwanda* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 163.
[89] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (Grand Rapid, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 505.

Lament is a channel for calling God and the community to hear from those with wounds and in suffering. Lament in pulpits may function as the place where the restoration of language takes place. It is a place to recall and restore the language about suffering that has been removed. Thus, preachers play an important role of helping people go "from the silence to lament."[90] If it is to trust in God without "being moved," as Psalm 26:1-12 says, it may also be the duty of preachers to not stop the lament but to call on lament with their congregations until God's answer is given to them.[91] William Willimon calls listeners to participate in lament for all the brokenhearted, departing from their comfort zone or their discomfort, awakening the apathy and amnesia of the listeners.

> If you're well situated, comfortable, not suffering, at home, you will be impatient with these sad Hebrews and their laments. "Can't we talk about something more pleasant? Something cheerful and upbeat? I want to feel good when I come to church." … I don't see anybody weepy on Sunday morning TV. Be Happy Attitudes; think positively; smile, God loves you; this is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it…. It takes a kind of courage to admit sadness. Weeping can be an act of resistance…. There's a heap of mourning out there and in here this Lent. And every time the church tries to cover it up with our pretty vestments, and smiling preachers, and well-dressed congregations, Psalm 137 has said to all the brokenhearted, "Come on in here. Bring your mourning to church. Let God have your rage. Weep with us!"[92]

This sermon may say that it is not only your lament but also my lament, the churches' lament, and God's lament. Preachers can then say, "You don't need to be alone, and I hope we can work on it together."[93] When lament

[90] Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 81.
[91] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 430.
[92] William H. Willimon, "Religious Rage," in *The Collected Sermons of William H. Willimon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 104-105.
[93] Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 7.

in pulpits becomes a communal lament of the listeners, preachers may move beyond lament in pulpits. The communal voice of Lamentations and "comfort women" presents a new way of life that can break the unconsciously or consciously learned indifference and oblivion: lamentation with a responsible witness and memory of suffering. Practicing lament ultimately pursues its goal to extend to all parts of life.

When the listeners of lament take part in the life of lament—accepting the pain of others as their own pain—it may be possible to bring the traces of Jesus's suffering into their lives. The pain of God comes because God embraces the pain of the world. God does not stand apart from the reasoning that humans understand, but rather throws Godself into hell and everywhere there is suffering. God's suffering is possible because God has listened and participated in humanity's reality of suffering.[94] Kazoh Kitamori argues that if any want to participate in Jesus's cross, they can serve God through engaging in others' pain.[95] By sharing others' pain and bearing that pain together, a congregation will be able to participate in the pain of God. Through practicing lament as a way of life, listeners may have an opportunity to heal their own wounds as well as the wounds of others. Our pain can be relieved by serving the pain of the people of God.[96] Lament becomes a channel through which wounds can be opened and healed. Therefore, lament goes beyond the practice of the voice in pulpits and reaches out to those who are exposed to oppressive conditions in society, including the poor, the hungry, the sick, those who suffer economic injustice, and those who experience rejection and marginalization because of race, gender, ethnicity, class, etc.

Lament preachers do not remain silent, do not deny suffering, do not accept accusations and guilt from the oppressive structures in society, and do not passively accept violence.[97] Lament preachers are seeking words, confronting fear, and resisting the unsatisfactory interpretation offered by theological tradition. The previous relationship with or understanding of God may have been destroyed, but we can call on God and make room for

[94] Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965), 27-28.
[95] Ibid., 50-52.
[96] Ibid., 53.
[97] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 123.

a new way to meet God.[98] Lament will help us bear the unsettling truth that resists apathy and amnesia and brings the sound of pain into the sermon as the story of the Gospel until God will wipe every tear from the eyes of those who suffer (Rev 21:4).

Eliana Ah-Rum Ku is Assistant Professor of Homiletics at the Graduate School of Practical Theology in South Korea.

[98] Ibid.

Layton Boyd Friesen. *Secular Nonviolence and the Theo-Drama of Peace: Anabaptist Ethics and the Catholic Christology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*. T&T Clark Studies in Anabaptist Theology and Ethics. London: T&T Clark, 2022.

In a world that is increasingly accepting a message of nonviolence, is there a need for a uniquely Christian approach to pacifism? This is the question that Layton Boyd Friesen seeks to engage in his recent book, *Secular Nonviolence and the Theo-Drama of Peace: Anabaptist Ethics and the Catholic Christology of Hans Urs von Balthasar.* For Friesen, Academic Dean at Steinbach Bible College, this question serves a greater need in Anabaptist ethics: it is indicative of the struggle faced by Mennonite theology over the last century to find a place for an Anabaptist ethic in the world without simultaneously becoming too worldly (3).

Friesen answers the question in the affirmative, and the purpose of his book is to map out what a uniquely Christian pacifism—or in his words, a *gospel* pacifism—might look like in today's secularized world. The answer here is in no way simple. For Friesen, gospel pacifism is not merely removing oneself from the world. Rather, gospel pacifism is both "a form of difference from the world" and "a form of unity with the world" (4). To further this answer, Friesen suggests that he is "looking for a dogmatic momentum by which to think about and practice pacifism," one which he finds in the 20th century Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (12). In what follows, Friesen presents "a one-way appropriation of Balthasarian themes to Mennonite ethics" in order to cultivate a gospel pacifism as both a form of unity and difference with the secular world.

Secular Nonviolence is divided into two parts. First, Friesen investigates gospel pacifism in a historical Mennonite context. He begins by probing the origins of Anabaptist nonresistance, claiming that in its origins, pacifism is "rooted in *Nachfolge Christi*, the imitation, participation, and solidarity of the body of Christ with the meek, incarnate Christ" (30). *Gelassenheit*, or the contemplative attention to the work of the Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ, is the impetus which drives gospel pacifism. Pacifism is thus not an ethic but an outcome of one's union with Christ.

Friesen then turns to Mennonite pacifism in the twentieth century,

particularly in its Benderian conception, which, he argues, distills the gospel pacifism rooted in *Gelassenheit* into an ordered ethic which resulted in assimilated North American Mennonites already knowing what the Lord required before they went to church (53). Friesen's critique is not the deployment of pacifism, or even the Yoderian impulse to politicize the Kingdom of God. Rather, Friesen's concern is that, in his view, "twentieth-century Mennonites were no longer willing to wait until a soul-deep, almost mystical union with Christ had achieved its results, either in personal, ecclesial, or societal transformation" (84). *Gelassenheit* had been traded for order.

The second part of *Secular Nonviolence* is where Friesen deploys the Balthasarian themes noted above. In Balthasar, he finds a threefold movement described as Incarnation, Provocation, and Convocation, in which he hopes to show that "nonresistance can be the theologically thick, ethically evocative posture of a disciple" (90). First, "Incarnation" traces Christ's "bidirectional nonresistance" in which Christ is both nonresistant to the will of the Father and open to the beauty and wretchedness of the human condition; thus, a union with this Christ would allow the divine love of the incarnation to flow through us. Second, "Provocation" follows Christ's incarnational descent into the world, in which Christ's action becomes not only the goad of peace but also violence, drawing substantially on Balthasar's reading of Revelation to further the claim that both peace and violence are ultimately theological terms. Third, "Convocation" marks the appearance of glory in human conditions as the church, in which pacifism blossoms as ecclesial love, directed even towards the enemy. In the end, this leads Friesen to claim that Balthasar's dogmatic Christology demonstrates a view of *Nachfolge Christi* in which Christians are called to live nonviolently precisely as and because Christ did.

In *Secular Nonviolence*, Friesen makes a significant contribution to the current discussion on Mennonite peace ethics. His book is academically rigorous, densely theological, but also carefully devotional as he firmly locates his own work in a theological tradition concerned with providing dogmatic theological bases for ethical practices. But it's precisely that which leads to my main question about this book. In its simplest form, Friesen's thesis is that Christians should live peacefully because Christ lived peacefully.

However, he complicates this by suggesting that we only know how to live as we practice *Gelassenheit* and attend ourselves to the will of Christ. So far, so good (in my opinion). I wonder, though, whether, in attempting to examine peace ethics in this way, Friesen is in danger of putting the proverbial cart before the horse. Friesen is attempting to provide a 'dogmatic momentum' to the Mennonite tradition of pacifism, but I wonder if, in doing this, he short-circuits his own appeals to *Gelassenheit*, recapitulating his critique that *Gelassenheit* has been traded for order, prioritizing pacifism over *Gelassenheit*?

To be sure, Friesen writes at length to avoid this, and I think he is fairly persuasive in this attempt. Thus, I raise this question not as a critique but rather as an attempt to drive to the heart of the matter. In advocating for *Gelassenheit* to be at the heart of *Nachfolge Christi*, which grounds Friesen's gospel pacifism, Friesen exposes us to the risk inherent in gospel pacifism. However, here this risk is not just in our theological systems. This risk comes with our life. The gospel pacifism Friesen presents isn't concerned with outcome, efficacy, or any sort of measurable result. This gospel pacifism is concerned with faithfulness. And living into this risk is precisely what is required for living faithfully in union with Christ, the one who took on risk in the incarnation, provoking the world but living in enemy love.

Daniel Rempel, Assistant Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, Providence University College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mark Thiessen Nation. *Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis: Recovering the True Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022.

In a 1976 *International Bonhoeffer Society Newsletter,* Dietrich Bonhoeffer scholar Larry Rasmussen wrote that he would give up his "5 o'clock sherry for six months" to hear Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer Eberhard Bethge and Anabaptists John H. Yoder and Dale Brown answer the riddle of Bonhoeffer's pacifism.[1] *Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis* is Mark Thiessen Nation's second full-length book response to that ongoing riddle and the continuation of a pacifist challenge to the "Niebuhrian" answer. The book argues for continuity in Bonhoeffer's pacifism by critiquing Bethge's alleged framing of Bonhoeffer as undergoing a "realist" shift from pacifism to assenting to violent resistance. Nation maintains that Bonhoeffer's commitment to a pacifism rooted in "the person and work of Jesus Christ" remained unchanged until his execution in April 1945.

Chapter one—which Nation suggests will "illicit the most controversy"—outlines and challenges the widely held impression that Bonhoeffer was deeply involved in plotting tyrannicide. Chapter two provides a contextualized and sympathetic reading of Bonhoeffer's early statements and later actions against National Socialist antisemitism. Chapter three argues for a "consistency" in Bonhoeffer's statements on peace throughout the 1930s, which Nation suggests reveal the "pacifist convictions" he maintained "for the rest of his life." Chapter four, "the heart of the book," shows the "theo-political" subversiveness of Bonhoeffer's books *Discipleship* and *Life Together*. Nation argues that Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the "visibility of the Christian community" was indirectly challenging the Nazification of the German Church.

Chapter five turns to Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* and argues that sections often read as referring obliquely to—or even justifying—tyrannicide are unclear and just as likely refer to war. Nation also provides a Christological reading of *Ethics* which includes "the redefining of key terms" such as responsibility, vicarious representation, guilt, freedom, and reality. Chapter six focuses on Bonhoeffer's poetry and creative writings composed while he was in prison.

[1] Larry Rasmussen, "Response (to Dale W. Brown)," ed. Clifford Green, *Newsletter: International Bonhoeffer Society for Archive and Research*, no. 9 (December 1976): 5.

Nation describes the relationship of Bonhoeffer's Christology in these later works to his earlier ones and shows the continuity between Bonhoeffer's inner and outer life. The epilogue aims, by way of theologian John Webster, at a "conceptual account" of Bonhoeffer's "reflections on the importance of the visibility of the church."

Two reviewers of Nation's 2013 book receive extended replies in the first two appendices. Responding to "senior Bonhoeffer scholar" Clifford Green, the first appendix is autobiographical and outlines the steps by which Nation arrived at his interpretation of Bonhoeffer's pacifism. The second, written with Stanley Hauerwas, responds to the criticisms of Michael DeJonge that Nation and Hauerwas make Bonhoeffer into an Anabaptist. In the third appendix, New Testament scholar Scot McKnight outlines a "Christoformic Hermeneutic" through which Bonhoeffer's pacifism is examined. The book ends with a critical review of Terrence Malick's 2019 film *A Hidden Life*.

The book presents a strong, although often repetitive, case for Bonhoeffer's commitment to, and advocacy of, pacifism throughout the 1930s and shows that Bonhoeffer never explicitly revoked these commitments in writing or in deed. The reality that outside of Bonhoeffer scholarship he is not widely regarded or presented as a strong advocate for pacifism reveals that a corrective de-centering of interpretations rooted in his post-1940 resistance is necessary, which Nation accomplishes. Another necessary task the book manages is its provocative case for a rereading of Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* which yields fresh insights compatible with certain non-principled forms of pacifism. Challenging the consensus surrounding certain "Niebuhrian" or "realist" readings of Bonhoeffer is an important task, especially in light of his 1930s peace commitments.

One area of difficulty with the book is in some of Nation's generalizing statements. For example, Nation states twice that the only historical evidence for Bonhoeffer agreeing to the necessity of killing Hitler are "memories of informal conversations" by "non-pacifists." This is only partially true. Bonhoeffer's meeting on behalf of the resistance with Bishop George Bell at Sigtuna, May 31, 1942, was planned and thought through by the resistance (see Sabine Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Resistance*). This more formal meeting was intended to explicitly share with peace-advocating Bell how high up the German military command the conspiracy against Hitler

went. Bell then produced a document from this meeting for the British government. At the meeting—as Bell recalled in 1945 from his 1942 meeting notes—Bonhoeffer was "distressed in his mind as to the lengths to which he had been driven by force of circumstances in the plot for the elimination of Hitler." Before this meeting, another member of the resistance, Hans Bernd von Haeften, had briefed Bonhoeffer. Haeften, Nation notes, "could not reconcile killing Hitler with his faith," citing Dramm that Haeften was "a convinced supporter of nonviolence." But Dramm qualifies Haeften's unease: "Almost all his life he was unable to reconcile the assassination of Hitler with his personal beliefs." The "almost" is important, since Haeften's widow recalls in her memoir that "Hans finally agreed to the assassination attempt." Does this prove that Bonhoeffer went the same way as Haeften and finally agreed with the necessity of killing Hitler? No. But both the formal nature of the meeting and Haeften's change-of-heart do complicate Nation's framing.

The book also raises the question of how to define pacifism. Nation claims an "ignorance of the varieties of pacifism" among Bonhoeffer interpreters and claims Bethge "to be working with a rather common stereotype of pacifism." The "common stereotype" being that a pacifist needs to be "principle-focused." Since Bonhoeffer rejected principle-based ethics, it follows that he could not be a "common" pacifist. Nation draws on Yoder to note "twenty-nine different logical approaches to pacifism" and identifies Bonhoeffer's approach first as "The Pacifism of Proclamation" and one-hundred pages later as "The Pacifism of the Messianic Community." Nation's redefining is not new, as other scholars have also re-labelled Bonhoeffer's pacifism as a "Christian peace ethic" with "conditional pacifism," or as an "ecumenical ethics of peace." Since Bonhoeffer himself warned against "doctrinaire pacifism" (which Nation neglects to mention) while identifying as a pacifist, it makes sense that defining just what type of peculiar pacifist he was becomes a major task. Nation's book helps with that task and is an important contribution in reclaiming Bonhoeffer's Christological pacifism as central to his life and witness.

Christopher P.W. Sundby, Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Pierre Gilbert. *God Never Meant for Us to Die: The Emergence of Evil in the Light of the Genesis Creation Account*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020.

In *God Never Meant for Us to Die*, Pierre Gilbert addresses the problem of evil through a close reading of the first chapters of Genesis. His goal is to offer a theodicy—an explanation that reconciles the existence of a good and all-powerful God with the presence of evil, pain, and suffering in the world he created. As an Old Testament scholar at Canadian Mennonite University, his primary approach is that of biblical theology. However, a strong philosophical undercurrent shapes and sharpens his argument as he interacts with a wide range of other viewpoints, making this book relevant and accessible to a wide range of readers.

He begins by examining existing approaches, both religious and secular, dividing them into two camps: those who claim evil is essential and eternal, and those who see it as an illusion or part of a larger good. He offers a "third way," one which takes seriously the reality of evil yet exonerates God, by placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of a historical Adam and Eve. Linking the presence of evil to the eating of forbidden fruit is nothing new; however, Gilbert articulates a clear and thought-provoking explanation of *how* so much suffering and pain resulted from a single transgression.

Gilbert treats the temptation in Eden as *part of* the creation process rather than an event that happened *after* God's creative work was finished. God desired to make humans in his image, giving them the ability to love and choose freely. However, Gilbert argues, free will was not something God could simply bestow or speak into existence. To do so would be logically impossible along the same lines as creating a circle square. It was only in *exercising* free will, particularly with regard to God's own person, that a creature could truly be said to have it. This meant that what was needed to finalize God's creative work was "a decision that would originate from the creature itself and independently from any divine coercion" (164). This was God's purpose in placing the forbidden tree in the garden and even in allowing the serpent's presence: to offer an "infinite point of critical choice" (63) that would activate free will and determine what kind of creature the human would be.

An important part of Gilbert's argument involves reading God's

injunction not to eat of the tree as a blessing/curse formulation, a common pattern in ancient literature that outlined the bounds of a relationship as well as the consequences for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Rather than "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," he suggests the Hebrew would be better translated as "the tree of the experience of the blessing and the curse" (66). The presence of evil, pain, and sorrow in the world today is the ongoing experience of the curse—the result of the first humans choosing disobedience and death over faithfulness and life.

While some theologians view Adam and Eve's sin as integral to God's larger plan to demonstrate his love and grace through Christ, Gilbert insists that the Fall was by no means inevitable. If they had chosen to obey God in that moment, a very different kind of human would have resulted—and God would have expressed his love through other means. The consequences of obedience would have been just as pervasive and lasting as the results of disobedience, and the process of Creation could have been completed according to the way of blessing.

In his relatively brief exploration of the atonement, Gilbert describes God's response to the evil humans unleashed, focusing primarily on the substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrifice. Surprisingly absent is any discussion of recapitulation, the view of the atonement that focuses on Christ's obedience on behalf of humanity in contrast to Adam's disobedience. The notion of an "infinite point of critical choice" which resulted in ongoing sin and death points naturally to Christ's own garden temptation, and the "not my will but thine" that led to righteousness and eternal life for humanity. Perhaps a sequel interacting with Romans 5 is in order.

Gilbert writes with clarity and precision without assuming prior knowledge, making this book of interest not only to theologians and clergy but to thoughtful people of all walks of life. While he posits a more literal/historical reading of the Genesis account than some may be comfortable with, he offers reasoned explanations for his viewpoints and demonstrates respect for others, making his central thesis accessible to a relatively wide theological audience. Unfortunately, his forceful views on side-topics such as abortion, postmodernism, and millennials may be distracting and off-putting for some readers.

God Never Meant for Us to Die is a well-articulated, thought-provoking

explanation for evil that is rooted in Scripture and in continual dialogue with other perspectives. Tragic, unjust, and painful things happen, not because God wills them, but because the world is broken. While this conclusion may not breed an optimistic view of life, Gilbert's epilogue offers a reminder of the eschatological hope Christians cling to even in the face of great suffering and death. For those struggling to reconcile the reality of evil with their faith in a loving God, Gilbert offers a theodicy that many readers will find both intellectually stimulating and emotionally satisfying.

Jeremy McClung, PhD Candidate, Wycliffe College, Toronto, ON.

Stephen Finlan, *Salvation Not Purchased: Overcoming the Ransom Idea to Rediscover the Original Gospel Teaching*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020.

In *Salvation Not Purchased*, Stephen Finlan builds on his previous work on atonement, arguing that Jesus's death does not purchase forgiveness or salvation from God the Father, but rather that Jesus saves and heals because it is God's desire to do so. This book is driven by his pastoral concern, designed to critique certain widely accepted beliefs in order to encourage deeper faith, and directed to those who are willing to reconsider their beliefs. Finlan begins by identifying problematic assumptions about God, such as the notions that violence is power and retribution is justice. He reasons that these are projections of human understandings onto God and identifies human politics, pride, and power-mongering as the cause of Jesus's death, not God the Father.

The most substantial sections of the book address how problematic conceptions of atonement entered Christian theology. Finlan's analysis includes identification of intra-biblical debates (especially prophetic critiques of the sacrificial cult), and the contextualization of ancient biblical views of sacrifice, purification, and atonement amidst other Ancient Near East cultures. He takes a pragmatic approach to Pauline language and metaphors, situating them as occasional pastoral writings that preached well but should not be read as systematic theology. And he employs textual criticism to

highlight what he views as unhelpful biblical developments.

After identifying the childhood abuse that Augustine and Luther endured, Finlan turns to the psychological issues that influence and result from both parental abuse and sacrificial atonement theologies, particularly shame and fear in the dysfunction of projected inversion (using others as scapegoats). He draws on Sandor Rado's psychoanalysis (which focuses on how people learn, adapt, and cope), concluding that atonement theologies have been greatly mistaken because "fear, guilt, frustration, and manipulation form the powerful emotional ancestry of atonement" (56). Finlan grounds his theological reconstruction on the Christological foundation of Jesus's divine identity as co-creator and savior, which provides eschatological hope for the restoration of all things and encouragement in the present process of spiritual transformation and growth (*theosis*). Finlan reasons that the only compelling reason for God to save people is that he is both able and willing, just as any loving human parent would be.

Finlan is rightly insistent that theology matters because it shapes actions in life, for better or worse. The emphasis on the unconditional, non-transactional love and power of God as demonstrated in Christ is likely to be a helpful basis on which readers may ground their theology and life. Accordingly, Finlan appropriately speaks to the issues of child abuse and anti-Semitism as examples of problems stemming from theology gone wrong. Additionally, his engagement with biblical texts, other ancient writings, and church history and theology will be useful introductions for readers who have not studied them in depth.

Although Finlan helpfully highlights the necessity of examining assumptions, at times he commits the linguistic fallacy of assuming that some of the lexemes he investigates, uses, and/or rejects have fixed meanings that may or must apply in any context (whether in Hebrew, Greek, or English). For example, in contrast to Finlan (20–23), not all scholars define *atonement* as divine appeasement by (human) blood or *ransom* as a cosmic transaction. Moreover, at times tangential arguments may cause more confusion than clarity, such as his views on spiritual rather than physical resurrection. Finally, his emphasis on forensic theological etiology (identifying the source of errors) is not balanced by sustained attention to how readers might deal with issues that have persisted for millennia. In short, his argument alone is

not likely to effectively address the deep emotional and psychological issues that he says so strongly influence theological views. Finlan acknowledges that it may take "decades of therapy and relearning" (67) but stops short of providing any substantial practical pastoral suggestions. For instance, attention to other psychotherapeutic frameworks and modalities and the neurobiological effects of trauma would help round out the consideration of psychological issues in relation to atonement theology.

For general audiences or perhaps undergraduate courses, this book may serve as an accessible introduction to one way of engaging the biblical and theological development of atonement theology. However, readers will need to do further research to broaden and nuance their theological views.

Jonathan D. Boerger, PhD Student in Christian Theology and Ministry Studies, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario.

Matthew D. Lundberg. *Christian Martyrdom and Christian Violence: On Suffering and Wielding the Sword.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

In this work of constructive theology and ethics, Matthew Lundberg argues that a soldier killed in the course of a just war should not be excluded from consideration as a Christian martyr. This negative way of framing the thesis is important, since he does not claim that every soldier killed in battle, or indeed every Christian killed in the course of their vocation, is necessarily a martyr. Rather, if the just war is a legitimate Christian ethic, and he argues it is, then it follows that in such a war a Christian *may* die a martyr. Given that martyrdom provides a critical lens for the reflection on the place of violence in the Christian life, Lundberg builds on the widespread recognition that Christian martyrs are not only those who die because of a particular confession of faith, but those, such as Oscar Romero and Martin Luther King, Jr., who are killed in the course of faithful Christian action.

To make this case, Lundberg first argues against biblical pacifism. This perspective, primarily as expressed by NT scholar Richard Hayes, and sixteenth-century Anabaptist martyrs, is typically rooted in the *imitatio*

Christi motif, which links the martyr to Jesus Christ. By contrast, Lundberg argues that the gospel calls for other modes of discipleship, especially in light of the sinful world for which Christians may have political responsibility. Much of the book consists of a constructive account of a principled just war realism, drawing on Augustine, Luther, Reinhold Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Michael Walzer.

Lundberg argues that martyrdom ought to inform how the just war tradition is embodied, including its deep ambiguities, tensions, and possibilities of refusing martyrdom for the sake of faithfulness. He suggests that martyrdom ought to be less about a heroic and virtually unattainable faithfulness and more about ordinary faithfulness under extraordinary circumstances. This book makes a good case that how martyrdom is commonly understood, and the ethical orientations it embodies, is too out of touch with the lives of most Christians, and that a theology of martyrdom needs to be more practical, even for those who may never suffer violent death.

Lundberg does not provide neat and tidy solutions but rather a framework for reconsidering perennial ethical questions. He probes the definition of violence and how conflicting expectations of soldiers cause moral injury. He very generously acknowledges the strength of arguments that undermine his own thesis. He engages with creative representations of martyrdom (the novel *Silence* and the film *The Mission*) in order to probe alternate paradigms. His important and welcome methodological point is that a basic Christian practice (interpreting some deaths as martyrdoms) illuminates intuitions as well as tensions that have not been fully articulated theologically. Though I myself contend for a nonviolent interpretation of Christian discipleship, I do not discount the just war approach as beyond the pale. But I do raise two critical issues.

First, while Lundberg draws on the *Martyrs Mirror* for his account of how nonviolence is linked with martyrdom in the peace church tradition, doing so is complicated by the fact that Anabaptist martyrs did not regard their persecutors as Christians who used violence but rather as a false church entirely, though not only because they used violence. But such an exclusive ecclesiology is not the position of most of their spiritual heirs. Contemporary peace churches do not quite police the theology of martyrdom for other Protestants in the way he suggests they do. Lundberg's argument would

have benefitted from engagement with contemporary theologians who link martyrdom and nonviolence from a peace church perspective (Craig Hovey, Tripp York, Chris Huebner, Gerald Mast) or a liberationist perspective (Rubén Rosario Rodríguez). Engagement with the former perspective would challenge Lundberg's claim that in the peace church tradition, claiming to imitate Jesus (in nonviolence) amounts to the presumptuous claim that such followers presume to bring about redemption. In fact, several of the peace church theologians named above assert that it is the false grasping at the attempt to make history turn out right that is the essence of violence. Engagement with the liberationist perspective would challenge the assumption that Christian nonviolence is necessarily or only rooted in *imitatio Christi*; it may be oriented by strategies of active nonviolent resistance in pursuit of justice.

Second, his attempt to bring together just war commitments with the realist approaches of Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer, and Walzer is both one of the more interesting aspirations of the book but also one that appears to undermine the argument with respect to martyrdom, at least as stated at the outset. A realist approach in which violence may be a lesser evil or tragic necessity is in tension with his overall advocacy of a just war ethic. In fact, Daniel J. Bell, Jr.'s account of just war as Christian discipleship (whose book on this topic is unfortunately not engaged at all by Lundberg) makes a strong case for why just war Christians should not think of a *just* war as "lesser evil" (Christians are never commanded to do evil). The rigorous and costly application of all just war criteria *ad bellum* and *in bello*, for which Bell advocates, would in fact support and advance Lundberg's initial thesis.

While Lundberg does propose a modest reframing of martyrdom, his ethical realism may suggest a more radical critique of martyrdom as interpretive category. Both pacifism and just war articulate bold and rigorous (if different) ethical ideals for which those who die in the course of their exemplary embodiment can be declared martyrs. But the realist inclination to recognize the pervasiveness of ethical ambiguity, mixed motives, and complicity in sinful structures might be in much deeper tension with the very idea of martyrdom and the ethical clarity it claims to illuminate.

Jeremy M. Bergen, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario.