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IN THIS ISSUE

On July 7, 2014, Pope Francis invited six victims of clerical sexual abuse to the Vatican where he met with them individually to ask for forgiveness on behalf of the church. “Before God and his people,” Francis stated in a homily following the meetings, “I express my sorrow for the sins . . . committed against you. And I humbly ask forgiveness. I beg your forgiveness, too, for the sins of omission on the part of church leaders who did not respond adequately to reports of abuse made by family members, as well as by abuse victims themselves.”

Critics of the Catholic Church quickly dismissed the pope’s actions as merely symbolic. Yet the public apology by the church’s highest leader made it clear that the pattern of denying or minimizing the history of clerical sexual abuse could no longer be sustained. In his concluding words, Francis praised the courage of those who had dared to “shed light on a terrible darkness in the life of the Church.”

Clearly, the Catholic Church has not been alone in its failures. In recent years, revelations of sexual abuse by well-known evangelical leaders have been widely reported—often following a familiar sequence of vigorous denial, disparaging claims about the victims, and strenuous efforts to preserve the reputation of the organization associated with the leader. And even though Mennonites would like to believe that their commitment to the gospel of peace has made them immune to sexualized violence, the painful truth is that abuse by church leaders is a reality in their tradition as well.

This issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* is devoted to the theme of sexual abuse—and the related motifs of discipline, healing, and forgiveness—within the Mennonite Church, with a particular focus on the controversy surrounding the actions of its most widely recognized theologian, John Howard Yoder (1927-1997).

We recognize the intense pain and controversy associated with this topic. Our decision to engage it in this public forum was not made casually. Clearly, many in the church are weary of the subject. Some are convinced that these issues have already been sufficiently addressed—an erring brother was restored to fellowship in the church and the time has come to put this topic to rest. Others have argued that the norms defining appropriate behavior have changed so significantly in recent decades that it is unfair to judge actions of the past by the standards of the present. Still others insist that we remain too close to the polarized context of the events to judge the facts fairly. And people on all sides of the conversation acknowledge with sadness the ongoing pain suffered by those most directly involved, along with friends and family members.

As editor of a journal committed to principles of balance and fairness, I am sympathetic with these concerns. Nonetheless, the arguments in favor of transparency are more compelling.

The first, and most important, reason for this special issue is the painful fact that sexual abuse is a reality among Mennonites, and that the church needs a forum to engage topics like discipline, accountability, and healing in a thoughtful way. Although the figure of John Howard Yoder looms large in the pages that follow, the primary goal of this issue has been to reflect critically on the broader themes surrounding that story. What, for example, has changed in the Mennonite Church since the 1970s, when concerns about sexual abuse were first raised in a public way? What have we learned since then about the trauma associated with sexualized violence? What pastoral insights for healing—both personal and collective—have we gleaned along the way? How do these experiences inform our understandings of forgiveness? And what are the larger blind spots in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and practice that have made it difficult to exercise appropriate discipline with offenders? These are all questions that the church must continue to address on the basis of careful scholarship and reflection, as this issue seeks to do.

Second, this issue of *MQR* explicitly addresses the details of John Howard Yoder's thought and actions because of his undisputed prominence in twentieth-century Mennonite theology, ethics, ecclesiology, and culture. Though relations with his coreligionists could sometimes be tense, Yoder was without a doubt the most widely-recognized Mennonite of his generation. For decades, he served as the primary spokesman for peace church theology, bringing Anabaptist perspectives to bear in countless ecumenical and interfaith encounters. The authority he wielded was vested not in an office, but in the breadth of his learning, the depth of his convictions, the range of his linguistic and rhetorical skills, and the profound insights of his interdisciplinary publications. His writings shaped the theological trajectory of Christians around the world, far beyond the boundaries of the Mennonite Church. Moreover, until 1993, when he was quietly removed as a member of the *MQR* Board of Editors as part of a disciplinary process, Yoder had a close association with this journal. He was not only a frequent contributor to *MQR*, publishing nine articles and dozens of book reviews, but in 1997 we published a comprehensive bibliography of Yoder's writings and we have printed numerous essays engaging his thought, including a special issue (July 2003) devoted entirely to his work. Given Yoder's public prominence, and the considerable attention granted to his scholarship in this journal, it is appropriate for

reassessments of his life and work to also find expression in the pages of *MQR*.

Finally, for at least twenty years prior to his death in 1997, stories were circulating in the Mennonite church and beyond that vaguely associated Yoder with inappropriate behaviors. Yet few people were entirely clear about what, exactly, those behaviors entailed, whether or not they were consensual, and who had the authority to call him to account. Although scores of women reported that they had been the recipients of Yoder's unwelcomed attention, their concerns were often met with a frustrating silence or a sense that those in authority had failed to respond effectively. Along the way, numerous individuals, some seven different accountability groups, and a variety of church institutions generally agreed to maintain confidentiality regarding Yoder's actions. Those efforts to control information frequently fostered confusion, left victims feeling powerless, and created the impression that church institutions were more interested in preserving their reputations than redressing grievances. As a result of this shroud of secrecy, the wounds of the past have continued to fester.

The essay by historian **Rachel Waltner Goossen** that opens this issue marks a crucial step forward in shedding light on a story that has been kept in the shadows for far too long. Written at the invitation of a discernment group appointed by leaders of Mennonite Church USA and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Waltner Goossen's narrative provides a careful account of the complex issues that have swirled around Yoder and his legacy for the past three decades. The results of her study, based on numerous interviews and an exhaustive examination of the available archival and print sources, are sobering. Among other findings, Waltner Goossen's essay makes it clear that Yoder's persistent experimentation with new forms of Christian intimacy often had debilitating consequences—first and foremost for the many women who were affected by his overtures, but also for church leaders and institutions who invested enormous resources of time and energy in disciplinary processes that were largely ineffective. Repeatedly, Yoder rejected criticisms of his actions with the pernicious argument that the world—or uncomprehending skeptics in his own circles—will always misunderstand the revolutionary claims of the gospel. At the same time, Yoder was preoccupied with secrecy as he reached out to women; and he often made confidentiality an absolute precondition for his engagement with various accountability groups, frequently citing the principles of Matthew 18. Though one of the disciplinary processes did eventually conclude with Yoder's restoration to full fellowship in his home

congregation and to broader church ministry, a host of unresolved relationships clearly persisted until his death. Waltner Goossen's essay will not be the final word in this story. But it does provide a bracingly clear narrative and the essential sources necessary for an informed debate to go forward.

The essays that follow shift the focus from Yoder to a larger ecclesial context. Thus, **Carolyn Holderread Heggen** and **Rebecca Slough**, drawing on clinical, pastoral, and theological insights, offer specific guidance to pastors and congregations who are walking alongside survivors of sexual violence in their long journey toward recovery. **Linda Gehman Peachey** then traces the growing awareness in the Mennonite Church of the reality of sexual abuse and the efforts of Mennonite Central Committee and other church leaders to respond with congregational guidelines, print resources, news articles, and support networks for abuse victims. **Gayle Gerber Koontz** follows with a probing theological reflection on the gospel's "frustratingly extravagant call to forgive." And articles by **Jamie Pitts** and by coauthors **Paul Martens** and **David Cramer** explore the deeper theological tensions embedded in the Yoder legacy. These final essays, and the fact that we conclude the issue with an extended review by **John Rempel** of a recent book about Yoder, signal our intention to continue engaging Yoder's thought in the future.

This issue of *MQR* will not resolve the problem of sexual abuse in the Mennonite Church; nor will it lay to rest the issues surrounding John Howard Yoder and the church's response to his sexual politics. But it does mark a step in the direction of transparency, a renewed resolve to allow light to shine in places that have been dominated by darkness.

That transparency, however, dare not stop with a public account of Yoder's actions, or a confession by church leaders and institutions of their culpability in what transpired. Right remembering must also include an acknowledgement of a larger collective guilt—a public recognition of our failure as a church to question the authority granted to our public icons, making us blind to things we should have seen, and unable or unwilling to respond decisively on behalf of the vulnerable and the injured. The way forward would be easier, as the Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn has written, "if it were necessary only to separate [evil-doers] from the rest of us. . . . But the dividing line between good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

In the stark light of that truth, we can only respond in humility, resolving by God's grace to do better.

– John D. Roth, editor

**“Defanging the Beast”:
Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder’s Sexual Abuse**

RACHEL WALTNER GOOSSEN*

During the mid-1970s, the renowned Christian ethicist and theologian John Howard Yoder embarked on an experiment in human sexuality, devising his own guidelines and selecting his own subjects, whom he called “sisters.” Writing in 1979 to his colleague and supervisor, Marlin E. Miller, the president of Goshen Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, Yoder laid out a continuum of activities in which he and a number of women had engaged:

- superficial touch as a natural greeting
- discussion of possible deeper meaning of touch
- more meaningful touch; may be a handclasp, a hug, or a brief kiss
- Same expressions as above but they become an expectation
 May be added a closed door, lap-sitting, a less fleeting kiss.
- token partial disrobing
- total disrobing
- specific touching of penis/pubis
- exploration of partial/interrupted arousal/intermission

“Other variables,” Yoder continued, “cut across these”:

- Whether just once as a threshold experience or repeated;
- whether done alone or with others present;
- whether the token nudity was a few minutes or longer.¹

*Rachel Waltner Goossen is a professor of history at Washburn University (Topeka, Kan.) The author initiated this study at the invitation of Mennonite Church USA’s Discernment Group.—<http://www.mennoniteusa.org/historian-to-examine-churchs-response-to-john-howard-yoders-abuse-of-women/>. Washburn University provided funding through a Faculty Research Grant. John Bender, Carolyn Holderread Heggen, James Lapp, Greg Leatherman Sommers, Ted Koontz, Walter Sawatsky, Dorothy Nickel Friesen and others assisted in providing documentation. Previously inaccessible institutional materials consulted for this project include the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and the Mennonite Church USA Indiana-Michigan Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019. Both collections are now available at the Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen, Ind. Additional AMBS files are also available at MC USA Archives—Goshen. Prairie Street Mennonite Church records

To these listings Yoder added an interpretive paragraph explaining that as part of the experimentation, he and whatever Christian sister he was with talked about “the reasoning behind” what they were doing, as well as “about unrelated matters (her ministry, friendships, future vocational choices), or past experiences which made this experience helpful. . . . Sometimes we talked about mutual friends. Usually we prayed.”²

One might reasonably imagine that, upon reading this memo, President Miller called the police and pressed charges against the 51-year-old professor who was methodically perpetrating sexual violence on female students and presumably other women on campus. But this was 1979. Courts had not yet consistently defined sexual harassment, and employers were not predisposed to call in law enforcement to respond to violence against women. No educational institutions in the United States, from the Ivy League to the smallest church-affiliated schools, had yet developed procedures for students to file formal complaints about sexual harassment or assault.³ Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), already well-established at larger institutions of higher education to safeguard the rights of human subjects in academic studies, did not yet exist at many private institutions, and certainly not at Goshen Biblical Seminary (G.B.S.).⁴ Besides, the discipline underlying Yoder’s methodology was not biology or psychology. Rather, as he explained to Miller, he was working from theological premises that included certain interpretations of the writings of Paul and the life of Jesus. And in 1979,

are located in Elkhart, Ind. Sara Wenger Shenk, Daniel Miller, and Nelson Kraybill facilitated some of the interviews conducted for this study. The author wishes to thank Ben Goossen, Nelson Kraybill, Steve Nolt, Tom Prasch, Kerry Wynn, and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review’s* editors for comments on earlier drafts.

1. Yoder to Miller, Dec. 6, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

2. Ibid.

3. Robin Wilson, “Why Colleges Are on the Hook in Cases of Sexual Assault,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 (June 2014), A10.

4. By 1979, Goshen Biblical Seminary, affiliated with the Mennonite Church (MC), had for two decades been in a cooperative arrangement with another educational institution, the Mennonite Biblical Seminary, affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church. Together, they were known as The Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, and each school had its own board and president but shared curricula and campus facilities in Elkhart, Indiana. Beginning in 1975, Miller served as president of Goshen Biblical Seminary; fifteen years later he also became president of Mennonite Biblical Seminary. In 1993 the two schools incorporated as one institution known as Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS). In 2012 AMBS changed its name to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. See C. J. Dyck, *The AMBS Story* (Elkhart, Ind.: Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 1996), 1-13, and “Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary” and “Goshen College Biblical Seminary,” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO)*, <http://www.gameo.org/>.

given a decades-long relationship that included Yoder's role as Miller's intellectual mentor as well as his predecessor in the president's office at the seminary, Miller was worried about the injurious effects these extracurricular activities were having on Yoder's 27-year marriage.

There was another powerful reason why Miller called in neither law enforcement nor an attorney to draw up a severance package. John Howard Yoder, who was both a professor of theology at the nearby University of Notre Dame and an adjunct faculty member at Goshen Biblical Seminary, was a prodigious and prolific Mennonite leader, known widely for his writings and lectures on discipleship. More than two decades earlier, he had completed a doctorate at the University of Basel on the sixteenth-century dialogues between early Anabaptists and Reformed theologians, and had embarked on a Christocentric career that would take him to church assignments and academic posts in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. His 1972 book *The Politics of Jesus* was already considered a classic on religious pacifism, and his influence on denominational and theological institutions and across international academic circles was immense.⁵

Today, institutions—whether religious or educational, private or public, small or large—are expected to respond more directly to allegations of sexual misconduct than in the 1970s, the era in which Yoder's patterns of behavior emerged. Presently, steps for preventing and addressing sexual abuse are encoded in policies reflecting insights from multiple disciplines: psychology and sociology, ethics and law. Thus, this historical study, begun in 2013 at the invitation of Mennonite Church USA, reflects an ongoing and evolving effort to understand legacies of sexual abuse for all involved—victims, their families, coworkers or others who have knowledge of the abuse, and those who perpetrate harm.⁶ Recent scholarship, including studies of abuse revelations in Roman Catholic dioceses, evangelical Christian missions, mainline Protestant parishes, and non-Christian religious contexts, suggests that sexual abuse is a pervasive problem in many religious

5. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972; rev. ed., 1994). In 2000, three years after Yoder's death, editors of *Christianity Today* named it one of the top ten books of the twentieth century.

6. The term "victims" is sometimes contested by persons who have experienced sexual abuse. Some prefer the language of "survivors" or "activists" in the aftermath of abuse. This article employs the term "victims" to convey past situations in which women experienced unwanted sexualized behavior from a person with academic and religious authority. This limited use of the terminology does not presume that these women regarded themselves as victims in perpetuity. On language preferences, see Kathleen M. Dwyer, "Surviving What I Know," in *Predatory Priests, Silenced Victims*, ed. Mary Frawley-O'Dea and Virginia Goldner (New York: Laurence Erlbaum, 2007), 108-109.

settings, due in part to the spiritual power attributed to leaders.⁷ The sociologist Anson Shupe argues that the moral weight of religious traditions often renders believers vulnerable to leaders' abuses. This is because of "special authority" ascribed to clergypersons and because believers "expect the best—not the worst" from those they revere.⁸ In response, local faith communities faced with accusations of abuse by their leaders may become defensive and "circle the wagons," either denying that sexual abuse occurred or blaming the victims for bringing the problem to the public's attention.⁹

This study focuses on the last twenty-five years of Yoder's life, when his sexual behaviors toward many women caused significant harm to them and, in some cases, to their spouses and other family members. As Marlin Miller and other Mennonite leaders learned of Yoder's behavior, the tendency to protect institutional interests—rather than seeking redress for women reporting sexual violation—was amplified because of Yoder's status as the foremost Mennonite theologian and because he conceptualized his behavior as an experimental form of sexual ethics. In a 1974 solicitation in which he appealed to women to engage with him, he wrote: "Only thanks to your friendship, sisterhood, can I do the theology."¹⁰ Remarkably, Yoder was conveying that the women whom he persuaded to join him would be test subjects for him. They were tools for him to use in his quest to perfect Christian theology.

Precise numbers will never be known, but two mental health professionals who worked closely with Yoder from 1992 to 1995 as part of a Mennonite church accountability and discipline process believe that more than 100 women experienced unwanted sexual violations by

7. Anson Shupe, *In the Name of All That's Holy: A Theory of Clergy Malfeasance* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995); Anson Shupe, *Rogue Clerics: The Social Problem of Clergy Deviance* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2008); *Wolves within the Fold: Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power*, ed. Anson Shupe (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

8. Shupe, *In the Name*, 26.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Yoder, "A Call for Aid," 1974, p 3.—AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Peter Bromley and Clinton H. Cress, "Narratives of Sexual Danger," in Anson Shupe, et. al., *Bad Pastors: Clergy Misconduct in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 60. An unknown number of women received this letter or similar appeals from Yoder in his sexuality studies in the months and years immediately preceding and following his drafting of this letter in July 1974.—Martha Smith Good interview with author, June 27, 2014. In 1977, in another essay, Yoder downplayed the research aspects of his writings on sexuality, referring to "the low-priority, informal, non-academic attention which I have been giving to the issue of singleness."—Yoder, "Intergenerational Affection," March 11, 1977, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder.¹¹ Others knowledgeable about the experiences of Yoder's victims cite more than fifty as a conservative estimate.¹² Some who were victimized by him, as well as others knowledgeable about his activities, warned educational and church leaders about the dangers he posed.¹³ Administrators at Mennonite institutions who knew of Yoder's sexual misconduct tended to keep decision-making close to the chest, a strategy of secrecy that resulted in information trickling out over a period of time.¹⁴ Yoder's advances included making suggestive comments, sending sexually explicit correspondence, and surprising women with physical coercion. Since Yoder's death in 1997, additional women have come forward, confirming evidence from his writings to Marlin Miller and other confidantes that Yoder's activities ranged across a spectrum from sexual harassment in public places to, more rarely, sexual intercourse.¹⁵ Some women found his sexual aggressions to be relatively inconsequential in their own lives. Other women's experiences were devastating, with trauma exacting a steep toll on marriages and careers.¹⁶

Initially, during the 1970s and early 1980s, Mennonite institutional responses to reports of Yoder's sexual violations were muted. At Goshen Biblical Seminary, President Miller conceived of a disciplinary process that he regarded as straightforward and biblical, and that he hoped would bring Yoder to accountability. Because Yoder cloaked his sexual behavior with women in theological language, and because his contributions to Christian thought centered on community as the locus for discipline, biblicism seemed crucial in framing the problem. Yoder himself had written and lectured extensively about the mandate of Matthew 18:15 for individual responsibility in confronting wrongdoing: "*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*"¹⁷

11. Betty Hochstetler interview with author, June 5, 2014; John G. Kaufman interview with author, June 5, 2014. Hochstetler and Kaufman had been appointed to Yoder's Accountability and Support Group because of their expertise in mental health issues; Hochstetler held a D. Min. and Kaufman held A.C.S.W. accreditation.

12. Carolyn Holderread Heggen interview with author, June 4, 2014.

13. Carolyn Holderread Heggen, "Misconceptions and Victim Blaming," *The Mennonite*, Aug. 2014, 31.

14. Richard Kauffman interview with author, June 7, 2014.

15. "Discernment Group Update," June 19, 2014, <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/an-update-from-the-discernment-group-on-sexual-abuse/>.

16. "Questions," compiled by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, et. al., Spring 2014, in the author's possession.

17. Mt. 18:15, R.S.V. For Yoder's perspective on Mt. 18:15-20, see "Binding and Loosing," originally in *Concern #14, A Pamphlet Series for Questions of Church Renewal* (Scottsdale, Pa.: The Concern Group, 1967), 2-32; see also Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 1-13. Mark Thiessen Nation contextualizes the "Concern" movement of the 1950s in light of

For Miller, the December 1979 memo in which Yoder outlined his experimenting-with-the-women project was disturbing, but not shocking. During the previous three years, Miller had already been confronting Yoder about his “relationships” with women, and the two Christian theologians were now engaged in a tug of words over how the conflict between Yoder’s experimentation and seminary interests might be resolved by a faithful application of Matthew 18. At this point in their exchange of memoranda, Miller was impatiently but hopefully waiting to see how the scriptural promise of “If he listens to you” would play out. It would be a long wait. Meanwhile, Miller’s casting the problem and its potential solution as biblical obfuscated actual abuses that were occurring on the seminary campus in young women’s apartments, and in closed-door office spaces and hotel rooms around the world. The consequences of this peculiar disputation would be far-reaching.

One of the oddest phrases in Yoder’s memo to Miller was “the ‘defanging’ of the ‘beast.’” The purpose of his exploratory sexual activities, Yoder explained, depended on the needs of a given woman. Often, he intended “to confirm the safeness of closeness by demonstrating non-arousal.” At other times, he wanted to help the woman he was with “overcome the fear/taboo feeling due to simple ignorance of anatomy.” Or, in the less-frequent instances when Yoder engaged in what he called “partial/interrupted arousal,” he did so to confirm to the woman—the object of his experimentation—that the “‘defanging’ of the ‘beast’ is really safe.”¹⁸ In subsequent discussions with Miller and others at Goshen Biblical Seminary, Yoder defined his activity of “partial/interrupted arousal” as genital penetration without ejaculation.¹⁹ By “defanging the beast,” he explained, he meant that he wanted to teach a woman who had expressed fear of sexual relations that what he called “familial intimacy” was demonstrably safe and not coerced—that is, not rape.²⁰

Yoder’s discipleship focus in *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 43-45.

18. Yoder to Miller, Dec. 6, 1979. —AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

19. *Ibid.* During the early 1980s, Yoder also described to Mennonite seminary leaders the technique of “stuffing,” which he noted was genital penetration without ejaculation. — Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author, June 4, 2014; Marcus Smucker interview with author, July 7, 2014.

20. In his writings and discussions about intimacy, Yoder employed two similar adjectives. At some points he referred to “familial intimacy” and at other times “familial intimacy.” In a 1977 essay, he noted that these terms were interchangeable in his descriptions of certain kinds of relationships. —Yoder, “Affective Sources for Singles,” July 1977, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; JHY Task Force meeting minutes, March 24, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files, in

Yoder's employing of metaphors—whether violent, as in “defanging the beast,” or seemingly innocuous, as in his later use of the phrase “falling off the bike”—for his behaviors and intentions toward women confounded Marlin Miller. Unlike administrators in the twenty-first century who, in all likelihood, would think long and hard about ensuring campus safety for students, employees, and seminary guests, Miller in these earliest years of his presidency worried principally about how to preserve his star professor's marriage and career. Miller, an ordained minister and a creative, industrious scholar who had assumed the presidency while still in his mid-thirties, had been a protégé of Yoder's. In the early 1960s, at Yoder's suggestion, Miller had moved to Europe for advanced study at Basel with the theologian Karl Barth and then had completed doctoral studies at the University of Heidelberg. From 1968 to 1974, Miller had administered programs for the Mennonite Board of Missions in Paris, a role that brought him into collaborative interactions with Yoder, who had worked with the agency for several decades. After coming to Goshen Biblical Seminary to teach in 1974-1975, Miller had left his missions post in France to become the seminary president. Shortly after this transition, he had learned from members of Yoder's own family about what he initially regarded as Yoder's extramarital relationships.²¹

When in 1975 Miller ostensibly became Yoder's boss at the Elkhart seminary, Yoder began to call him “padre,” or alternatively, “*père*.”²² In the years to come, Yoder's ironic and sometimes perverse use of language, and his conflating of religious and therapeutic explanations, would similarly confound and unsettle an expanding circle of Mennonite administrators. Clergy and laypersons alike—some of them “sworn to secrecy” and others fearful of consequences from speaking out—would find themselves trying to understand and respond to Yoder's theologizing of sexual behaviors between himself and women.²³

In 1980, soon after receiving the “‘defanging’ of the ‘beast’” memo, President Miller established a disciplinary process with a small cadre of insiders at the Goshen Biblical Seminary, an early and secretive attempt

the author's possession. In 2015, The Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files will be made accessible for researchers at the MC USA Archives-Goshen.

21. Marlin Miller to AMBS Faculty, Staff, and Boards, July 2, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Gordon Dyck, notes from Church Life Commission meeting with Anne Yoder, Aug. 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Miller biographical information provided in interview of Ruthann Miller Brunk by Sara Wenger Shenk, Aug. 1, 2014.

22. Shellenberger interview with author.

23. Quotation from Larry Eby, “John Howard Yoder and the Original Seminary Board Process,” email communication, Aug. 4, 2014, in the author's possession.

at accountability and discipline that lasted nearly four years. Ultimately, their efforts to stop Yoder's aggressions toward women would prove unsuccessful, and they would force his departure from Goshen Biblical Seminary. This collection of faculty and seminary board members, who drew up a "covenant" with Yoder and thus called themselves the "Covenant Group," would be the first of seven assemblages of Mennonites—some of them standing committees, others ad hoc—that challenged Yoder from within institutional bases. These Mennonite challengers and their eras of engagement with Yoder were:

1. Covenant Group, Goshen Biblical Seminary, 1980-1984
2. Confidential Task Force, Goshen Biblical Seminary, 1982
3. Board of Elders, Prairie Street Mennonite Church, 1986
4. Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force, 1991-1992
5. Church Life Commission, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1992-1996
6. Accountability and Support Group, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1992-1996
7. Executive Board, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1992-1997²⁴

These groups had varying goals: to engage Yoder intellectually in hopes of grasping what merits there might be in his unconventional notions about sexuality; to investigate rumors of his sexual misdeeds; to discipline him; or some combination of the above, occasionally in tandem with trying to arrange for face-to-face meetings between women accusers and Yoder as a step toward forgiveness and reconciliation.²⁵ No group succeeded completely in challenging Yoder's unwanted behavior toward women. For the last two decades of his life, Yoder discussed, sparred, and negotiated with these various parties. In all cases, people grew weary after a few months or years of engagement. Like Miller in the beginning, each group sought to "counsel" their Christian brother rather than to have him arrested or expelled. Persons who through employment or credentials entered the fray from outside the denomination felt stonewalled, not only by Yoder himself but also by the

24. Documentation for the Covenant Group, the 1982 Confidential Task Force, and the 1986 Board of Elders accountability efforts is in the AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen. Documentation for the Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force of 1991-92 is in the author's possession, provided by James Lapp. Documentation for the Church Life Commission, the Accountability and Support Group, and the Executive Board of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference is in the MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen.

25. "Charge to JHY Task Force," 1991-92, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

secrecy surrounding his behavior, which served to protect Mennonite institutional interests. In 1985, for example, a young pastor named Charlie Cooper arrived in Elkhart to serve Prairie Street Mennonite Church, the congregation of which Yoder had been a member for years. Cooper had been on the job only a few months when he and the congregation's leadership council, the Board of Elders, decided to confront Yoder about reports of ongoing sexual misbehavior. Years later, Cooper recalled: "I asked him, [taking a] personal, relational, pastoral approach, and was made dizzy by his verbiage, re-directs, subjugations, semantics. . . . To this day [I] have *no idea* what-the-[expletive] JHY *did!*"²⁶ When Cooper appealed for help from Mennonite leaders in the community, those who knew the history of Yoder's sexual violations were not sharing.²⁷

While at some junctures Yoder's history of sexual abuse is impervious, many aspects of this story are becoming clearer. Although Yoder's personal papers on this subject—housed at the Mennonite Church USA Archives—remain closed until 2047, other documentation is now accessible. More than two dozen Mennonite men and women involved in various accountability efforts kept, either in institutional files or in home storage, the written records generated by their efforts. By the 1990s, documents in the form of memoranda, handwritten notes, meeting minutes, and mental health records had piled up. Still, leaders of Mennonite accountability groups sought to control and contain information, and not all the materials survived. As one leader queried another, "We have a considerable amount that needs shredding. Do you know where we could have this done?"²⁸ Time and again, systemic destruction of files pertaining to Yoder's sexual abuse occurred. But the immense paper trail was uncontrollable. And the memory bank of individuals could still be accessed.²⁹

26. Quotation from Charlie Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

27. Charlie Cooper to Marlin Miller, Dec. 24, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

28. Atlee Beechy to Sherm Kauffman, May 8, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

29. The John Howard Yoder Papers at the Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen include "Sexual Harassment Charges and Conference Discipline" documents in Box 240, restricted until 2047, fifty years after Yoder's death. Individuals who in 2014 granted interviews to the author include Jean Bender, John Bender, Gordon Dyck, "Elena" (pseudonym), Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Simon Gingerich, Martha Smith Good, Judy Harder, Keith Harder, Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Betty Hochstetler, Loren Johns, Richard Kauffman, Sherm Kauffman, Nancy Kauffmann, John G. Kaufman, Gayle Gerber Koontz, Ted Koontz, J. Nelson Kraybill, James Lapp, "Maureen" (pseudonym), Mary Ellen Meyer, Ben Ollenburger, "Rosalie" (pseudonym), Walter Sawatsky, Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, Willard Swartley, Everett Thomas, and Harold Yoder.

UNWELCOME SEXUAL ADVANCES

The decades-long sweep of this story, and its propensity to inspire public debate, requires careful attention to late-twentieth-century shifts in laws addressing sexual behavior. Legal considerations of sexual harassment have historically been guided by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sex discrimination in the workplace, and by definitions established by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Prior to the 1970s, federal courts did not recognize sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, dismissing it as mere flirtation.³⁰ In 1976, U.S. federal courts began considering cases related to sexual harassment in the workplace. A decade later, the first U.S. Supreme Court case to address sexual harassment linked it to hostile working environments and held that the viability of sexual harassment claims depended on whether the advances were “unwelcome.”³¹ During the 1980s, the federal gender-equity law, Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act, began to be cited in court cases in which female students argued that sexual harassment was discriminatory and, therefore, illegal.³² In the 1990s, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed cases involving teachers’ sexual overtures toward students, and, in 2001, the federal Education Department issued a new standard establishing sexual harassment as discriminatory, mandating that educational institutions take preventative steps in addressing sexual harassment and eliminating hostile environments in which persons are intimidated.³³

Over the past four decades, legal considerations guiding definitions of sexual harassment have expanded as a result of increased attention to the experiences of female students and workers, often spurred by

30. The term “sexual harassment” was coined in 1975 by feminists in Ithaca, N.Y.; this history is recounted in Caroline A. Forell and Donna M. Matthews, “Men, Women, and Sex at Work,” in *Sexual Harassment: Cases, Case Studies, & Commentary*, ed. Paul I. Weizer (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 229.

31. The case was *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986); Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 4-5.

32. The best-known case using Title IX (1972) to establish that sexual harassment can be considered discriminatory is *Alexander v. Yale University* (1980). In its decision, the U.S. District Court ruled against the plaintiffs, but the case prompted Yale University and other schools to institute formal grievance procedures.

33. Wilson, “Why Colleges are on the Hook,” A10; see also Jimmy Carter, *A Call to Action: Women, Religion, Violence and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 44. Landmark cases addressing educational settings include *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* (1992) and *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* (1999). On federal guidelines, see “Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties, Title IX,” Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2001, <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/pdf/shguide.pdf>.

feminist activists.³⁴ As legal attention to sexual harassment has evolved, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines have provided frameworks for determining when unwelcome sexual advances and requests for sexual favors constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment may be physical (such as kissing, hugging, pinching, patting, grabbing, blocking the victim's path, or leering at the victim), or verbal (either oral or written), and can include requests.³⁵ Commission guidelines note that acts of physical aggression or intimidation are sometimes combined with incidents of sexual harassment, further establishing evidence of abuse.³⁶ Although these definitions for sexual harassment became mainstream after Yoder had begun his project, his continued advances toward women through the 1980s coincided with cultural shifts in which notions of sexual harassment came to be regarded, both within Mennonite circles and beyond, as directly applicable to his actions.

Yoder's legacies of sexual abuse were deeply harmful within his own Mennonite community in northern Indiana and well beyond his academic bases. A highly mobile professor and churchman, he approached (mostly Mennonite) women both near and far from home, violating contemporary general understandings of propriety. For more than two decades, three key institutions—his part-time employer, Goshen Biblical Seminary; his local congregation, Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart; and the regional Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, which held his ministerial credential—all responded to reports of Yoder's sexual misconduct. With no legal charges ever filed, adjudication, such as it was, took place in local Mennonite settings—seminary lecture halls, conference quarters, and living rooms—often involving Mennonites who were also closely connected to Yoder through collegiality, educational history, congregational fraternity, or even family relationships. Despite the faith community's longstanding commitment to nonviolence and its polity emphasis on local authority rather than entrenched hierarchies, these Mennonite leaders' interventions, while often well-intentioned, were largely ineffectual.³⁷

34. Campaigns against sexual violence in the context of U.S. governmental systems are the focus of Kristin Bumiller's *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

35. Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 5-6. On the E.E.O.C. guidelines, see Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 299-339 and "Sexual Harassment," <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/sexual+harassment>.

36. Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 335.

37. "Comments from Victims for the Yoder Discernment Group," compiled by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, et. al., May 2014, in the author's possession.

Yoder also had a variety of other agency and institutional affiliations. His colleagues at *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (where he served on the board of editors for more than thirty years), Mennonite Board of Education, Mennonite Board of Missions, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Historical Society, and Herald Press all played some role in responding to reports—often circulated informally—that he was engaging in inappropriate sexual activities. And by the 1990s, as evidence mounted that his actions toward women were often detrimental, three Mennonite liberal arts colleges—Yoder’s alma mater, Goshen College, in Indiana, as well as Bethel College in Kansas and Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia—were grappling with whether or not to welcome him as a visiting speaker on their campuses.³⁸ But as scholars Brian Hamilton and Kyle Lambelet point out, Yoder’s professional reputation suffered only marginally. He was never formally disciplined by the broader academic and religious peers with whom he was closely affiliated, including his employer, the University of Notre Dame, and the Society of Christian Ethics, where he served a term as president in 1987-1988. Institutional problems of whether and how to respond to reports of Yoder’s sexual abuse extended well beyond the realm of Mennonite leaders. Yet even though Yoder’s sexual violations were known beyond the Mennonite world, those with the power to discipline him seem to have abdicated that responsibility.³⁹

The noted sociologist Andrew Greeley has written of sexual abuse and institutional response mostly in the context of American Catholic hierarchies, but his insights cut across religious lines. “The clerical elite,” he argues,

will rally around the accused person because an attack on him is an attack on the whole elite. . . . For the sexual abuser this provides an almost perfect situation. You can exploit, and your colleagues will protect you from the effects of your exploitation either by denying it or finding you another place to exercise your power.⁴⁰

38. In the mid-1980s, Goshen College instituted a policy to prohibit Yoder from visiting campus, but made an exception in the early 1990s when the college hosted a Believers Church conference that Yoder had helped to plan. On 1990s-era controversies over invitations for Yoder to speak, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, “Campus Protests and John Howard Yoder,” *Mennonite Life* (forthcoming, 2015).

39. Hamilton and Lambelet argue that scholars have a continuing responsibility to interrogate Yoder’s theological work with his history of sexual violence in mind. This includes not only his writings on human sexuality, but more importantly, his writings on peace and nonviolence. See “A Dark Theme Revisited: How to Read Yoder’s Sexualized Violence,” unpublished, 2014, in the author’s possession.

40. Andrew Greeley, review of *Spoils of the Kingdom* by Anson Shupe, *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 37 (March 2008), 142.

Of course, Catholicism's management of priests' abuse of parishioners, like Mennonite responses to Yoder's sexual abuse of women, reveals more nuance than Greeley's indictment suggests. In this particular Mennonite drama, with its Catholic (Notre Dame) overtones, institutional processes lasted over two decades and ranged over multiple locales. Meanwhile, ideas about what to do kept changing. From the 1970s through the 1990s, terms such as "accountability" and "confidentiality" were laden with shifting and contested meanings. The concepts "sexual harassment" and "sexual abuse" had far more cultural cachet in the 1990s (when Yoder's abuses came to an end) than in the 1970s when President Miller first confronted him. Secrecy aside, whenever groups of Mennonites who were engaged in confronting Yoder *did* talk among themselves, these framing complexities often led them to talk past one another rather than with one another. As these exertions played out, wordsmithing, as well as the passage of time, worked to Yoder's advantage.

Yet during the 1980s and continuing into the early 1990s, the secrecy that had veiled Yoder's sexual violence in preceding decades began to collapse. Some of the women who had experienced Yoder's sexual aggressiveness but had previously been unknown to each other initiated conversations, recorded their experiences on paper, and leveraged their collective will to force Mennonite leaders to stop his abuse.⁴¹ Whether they responded to his sexual aggressiveness as merely offensive and with rebuff, or with feelings of violation, anguish, betrayal, and anger, the residue was a lifetime of wariness about sexual power plays.⁴² Their efforts at whistle-blowing—never formalized as an ongoing "group" response because they lacked the capital and infrastructure that Mennonite institutions possessed—culminated with several dramatic events in 1992, a turning point in the denomination's dealings with Yoder. Many people came to know at least a little about his harmful

41. Feminist theory on victimization highlights the importance of constructing narrative, as well as finding supportive listeners, for survivors of sexual abuse to develop control over events that they experienced as traumatizing. Over time, according to philosopher and trauma survivor Susan Brison, this process "reintegrates the survivor into a community, reestablishing her trust in others."—Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), xi. See also Diane Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 85.

42. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author, July 8, 2014; "Maureen" (pseudonym) interview with author; Good interview with author; Heggen interview with author; handwritten notes of James Lapp, March 27, 1991, in the author's possession; confidential statement from eight women to the JHY Task Force, 4-page typescript, Feb. 21-22, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. On sexual victims' range of responses to clergy abuse, see G. Lloyd Rediger, *Ministry and Sexuality: Cases, Counseling, Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 23-24.

past.⁴³ An avalanche of news stories that year, from accounts in *The Bethel* (Kansas) *Collegian* and *The Mennonite Weekly Review* to the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*, linked Yoder's name to credible reports by women of having been sexually abused.⁴⁴ These initial press reports were thin on detail, but the ramifications of what some Christian theologians would later call "scandalizing John Howard Yoder" were enormous.⁴⁵ Despite all of its twists and turns with Mennonite officialdom and women's agency, this saga would fall short of reconciliation.

MAPPING A NEW CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS

Constructing a narrative about the scope of Yoder's sexual abuse and Mennonite responses to it is more conceivable now than in earlier decades, when secrecy held sway. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century accounts of Yoder's life (1927-1997) and his influence in word and deed appear in published sources that include a substantial obituary in *The New York Times*, a biography, and a new memoir recounting the life of Yoder's wife, Anne.⁴⁶ Mark Thiessen Nation, in his 2006 volume *John Howard Yoder*, describes a boyhood in northeastern Ohio, undergraduate studies at Goshen College, and subsequent European postwar relief work through a Mennonite Central Committee assignment where Yoder met a young French Mennonite, Anne Guth. In 1952 the couple married.⁴⁷ Yoder's formulation of a specifically Christian sexual ethic, or

43. For an account of how dawning awareness of Yoder's sexualized theology led others in academe to distance themselves, see Gerald Schlabach, "Only Those We Need Can Betray Us," July 10, 2014, <http://www.geraldschlabach.net/2014/07/10/only-those-we-need-can-betray-us-my-relationship-with-john-howard-yoder-and-his-legacy>.

44. Kimberly Cott, "Yoder Disinvited to Conference," *Bethel Collegian*, March 5, 1992, 1; Paul Schrag, "Bethel Withdraws Invitation for Theologian to Speak; Sexual Misconduct Alleged," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 12, 1992, 3; Peter Steinfels, "Religion Notes: Ministerial Transgressions," *The New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1992; "Mennonite Theologian Disciplined," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1992, 8. The source for the *Tribune* article was Religious News Service, which reported in news outlets across the nation that Yoder had "admitted to charges of sexual misconduct."

45. "Scandalizing John Howard Yoder" is the title of an investigative piece by David Cramer, Jenny Howell, Jonathan Tran, and Paul Martens, July 7, 2014, <http://theotherjournal.com/2014/07/07/scandalizing-john-howard-yoder/>. For a brief interpretation of the ironies of "reconciliation" in Yoder's legacy, see Mark Oppenheimer, "A Theologian's Influence, and Stained Past, Lives On," *The New York Times*, Oct. 12, 2013, A14.

46. Peter Steinfels, "John H. Yoder, Theologian at Notre Dame, Is Dead at 70," *The New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/07/us/john-h-yoder-theologian-at-notre-dame-is-dead-at-70.htm>; Nation, *John Howard Yoder*; Anne Marie Guth Yoder with Rebecca Yoder Neufeld, *What I Hold Precious* (N.p.: St. Jacobs Printer Ltd.), 2013.

47. Nation, *John Howard Yoder*, 17. Nation referred in his biography to what he termed "allegations regarding inappropriate sexual activity" (25, n. 92). More recently, Nation offered additional perspectives on Yoder's history of sexual harassment and sexual abuse

at least his early articulations of its roots, stretch back to his post-World War II years in Europe. As a young man he spoke to friends and family about "trying to live as if not married when you were married, from I Corinthians 7:29: 'from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none.'"⁴⁸ His wife recalled years later that

He once preached on I Corinthians when we were engaged and it scared me a bit. "He who refrains from marriage will do better." (I Corinthians 7:38). He had this admiration for people who did not need to get married, who had complete dedication to the work. He thought it was better to be single, and would say: "*Soyons plus comme eux*; let us be more like them." He talked about how single people could give themselves more fully to service. . . . In any case John's married life certainly didn't keep him from giving full time to the church's business.⁴⁹

By 1970, Yoder, his wife, and their six children were living in Elkhart, Indiana, and he was president of Goshen Biblical Seminary. As acting dean (as well as president) during the 1972-1973 academic year, Yoder took an interest, along with his colleague Erland Waltner, then serving as Mennonite Biblical Seminary's president, in reports that a group of a dozen or more female seminary students and working women were holding weekly meetings in a student apartment.⁵⁰ This consciousness-raising group was discussing the women's movement, reading books on feminist theology, and musing over how to incorporate these interests into their studies. Already, they and their families had established a cooperative daycare facility with financial and administrative support from the seminary. At the same time, they were aware of ongoing tensions with an older group of women (faculty wives and women with adjunct teaching roles) whose perspectives on gender roles in family and church settings were comparatively traditional. In the spring of 1973, the younger women made a proposal to a skeptical President Waltner: they would develop a women's studies course. Within months they gained administrative approval and developed the first class on feminist theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries.⁵¹

in "On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder," coauthored with Marva Dawn, Sept. 23, 2013, <http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/>.

48. Yoder, *What I Hold Precious*, 88.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Martha Smith Good, email to author, July 8, 2014; Dorothy Nickel Friesen, "Women Changing," typescript, 1973, in Friesen's possession.

51. Dorothy Nickel Friesen interview with author, July 17, 2014.

As it turned out, the class “Women in Church and Society” was a campus hit. During the fall 1973 semester, the 15-week evening seminar drew an enrollment of more than fifty people. The course had an unusual format. Faculty and students shared responsibility for convening weekly sessions and hosting guest speakers who presented on topics ranging from women in biblical times, to the roots of the American feminist movement, to abortion.⁵² Yoder had volunteered to serve as faculty advisor for the course, and as the liaison with the student conveners he took responsibility for administrative duties, including grading. Many auditors and off-campus guests attended the class, including Yoder’s wife, Anne, who wanted to hear what young women on campus were saying about changing roles for women in society.⁵³

The curricular addition of “Women in Church and Society” at A.M.B.S., contemporaneous with the tide of women’s studies at graduate-level institutions arising across the U.S. and Canada, represented an early effort by young second-wave feminists struggling to find their places in ministerial vocations and other religious settings. At the time of this inaugural course offering, no Mennonite woman had yet completed a Master of Divinity degree at A.M.B.S. Mennonite congregations had not begun hiring women as professional, ordained ministers. Accordingly, professors at the Elkhart seminary routinely advised female students to “go into teaching” or to pursue a Master in Religious Education degree.⁵⁴

In the 1973-1974 academic year, graduates of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries were all men. The faculty included very few women, concentrated in areas such as Christian Education and language study. But changes were coming. The registrar’s annual records show that, over the decade, the proportion of women enrolled at the seminary increased from 6 percent to 37 percent:

52. Student planners included Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Carole Hull, and Rachel Friesen.—Dorothy Nickel Friesen, email to author, July 10, 2014; Dorothy Nickel Friesen, “Women in Church and Society,” *Window*, AMBS publication, Dec. 1973; course syllabus listed in John Howard Yoder memo to Weyburn Groff, Dec. 17, 1976, in Friesen’s possession.

53. Friesen, “Women in Church and Society”; JHY Task Force meeting minutes, March 24, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; “Women in Church and Society Course Evaluation,” 1973, in Friesen’s possession. Nearly two decades later, Anne Yoder told Mennonite church officials investigating reports of her husband’s past sexual misconduct that she had attended the class in part because she feared that her husband was interested in talk of sexual liberation—in vogue at the time—and that he would not be able to resist overtures from women.—JHY Task Force meeting minutes, March 24, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

54. Friesen interview with author.

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979⁵⁵</u>
Men	82	82	87	87	94	116	129	123	133	139
Women	5	14	16	36	49	52	63	55	66	83
% Women	6%	15%	15%	29%	34%	31%	33%	31%	33%	37%

In coming years, some of the participants in the “Women in Church and Society” course would be among the first women licensed and ordained in Mennonite settings.

By the fall semester of 1973, Yoder stepped down as Goshen Biblical Seminary’s president, and his colleague Joseph Hertzler became interim president. Soon thereafter, in 1975, Marlin Miller would start his nearly two-decade tenure as president of G.B.S. Meanwhile, Yoder, freed from administrative responsibilities, began to write on what he termed “the dignity of single persons.”⁵⁶ It was common practice at the Mennonite seminaries in Elkhart for faculty to circulate for discussion drafts on any number of theological topics: nonresistance, Calvinism, eschatology. With the “Women in Church and Society” class creating a popular forum for discussing gender and family roles, Yoder’s distribution of relevant essays spiked. Through the mid-1970s, Yoder circulated at least a dozen unpublished papers among colleagues, students, and friends.⁵⁷ In one of these, written in 1977 and reflecting on the history of his conceptualizations about marriage and relationships, Yoder noted:

My initial thinking and informal writing on the subject of the dignity of single persons arose from a context of institutional and pastoral concerns. . . . I was bothered by the way I saw agencies, including church agencies, dealing with single persons as less worthy of respect or of responsibility. Secondly, I saw the unhealthy effects which the drive toward early marriage had upon the quality

55. Weyburn Groff, “Number of Female Students,” July 20, 1983, typescript in Friesen’s possession. On part-time and full-time enrollments at G.B.S. and M.B.S., see Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Ventures of Faith: The Story of Mennonite Biblical Seminary* (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 1975), 103.

56. Yoder, “Affective Resources for Singles,” July 1977, p. 1.

57. One unpublished essay appeared in the decade previous to the essays discussed here. See Yoder, “When is a Marriage not a Marriage,” 1968, addressed initially to “interested Mennonite churchmen” and later circulated more broadly to seminary students and others. — AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

of the marriages of those who settle upon a marriage partner very early because of the fear of remaining single.⁵⁸

In this same essay, which he cautioned was neither for publication nor quotation, Yoder wrote that in 1974 he had begun to develop "the notion of a distinction between two dimensions of sexuality, the familiar and the genital."⁵⁹ His ideas, he said, were "exploratory and noncommittal," and he solicited "critical reactions of all kinds" from those to whom he was circulating his work. He noted that "the prude and the pornographer agree that the only genuine or natural expression of bodily affection is genital."⁶⁰ But biblical exegesis offered an alternative to consider: "From Jesus, if we understand him correctly," Yoder added, ". . . we are now able to say that freedom of bodily affection and intimacy is not necessarily correlated with the satisfaction of genital drives."⁶¹ In present-day society, among people who struggle with inhibitions, Yoder suggested that "there will need to be some experience of therapeutic tension and adjustments."⁶² Further, he speculated that persons plagued either by inhibitions about sexual intercourse or by promiscuity would have difficulty attaining what he termed "the freedom of the Gospel," which Yoder linked to Jesus' encounters with women:

. . . the freedom of the Gospel, the freedom which Jesus lived out with women who touched him and whose status as sexual victims was an immediate part of his ministry to them.⁶³

As would become apparent to many individuals with whom Yoder interacted in the coming years, this reference to Jesus and "women who touched him" were not idle words. For the theologian whose depiction of Christian discipleship in *The Politics of Jesus* was empowering, such politics in a decade of women's liberation were now becoming personal.⁶⁴

58. Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," July 1977, 1. For an example of Yoder's thinking on this topic as early as 1973, see his revised essay "Singleness in Ethical and Pastoral Perspective," in *Being Single: Resources on Singleness*, ed. David Selzer (New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1986), 72-95.

59. Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," July 1977, pp. 1, 6. Yoder began this essay with the caveat that, unlike his earlier treatises on similar topics, this one "should not be passed on to persons uninformed about, or unready to respect the confidential personal and church context within which this exploration is undertaken."

60. *Ibid.*; quotations are on pp. 1 and 11.

61. *Ibid.*, 11.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, 12.

64. Yoder also critiqued contemporary feminist intellectual currents. In an essay focused on Jesus' countercultural engagement with women in antiquity, Yoder emphasized the

What explains Yoder's evolution into this speculative thinking in the decade of the 1970s? Yoder's popularity as a Mennonite leader was closely tied to his own celebrated work in postwar writings about Mennonite peace theology, which meant that he both wrote about and embodied a normative and laudable form of Mennonite masculinity. This enhanced his status especially with other male leaders and made it unlikely for them to question or critique him. And Yoder's Christology, centered on a "political" Jesus imbued with social forms of power, offered resources for speaking and writing about the historical man whose spiritual freedom Yoder venerated.⁶⁵ Yoder thought speculatively about Jesus' sexuality as a model for his disciples, for the men who followed in his path. Still, while Yoder circulated his ideas about "familiar" or "familial" sexuality (terms he used interchangeably in his unpublished papers with the terms "non-genital" and "non-erotic"), he also called for "confidentiality" in circulating such ideas about men's and women's touching:

It follows that when we exercise modesty and confidentiality with regard to the expression of the alternative style being talked about in this paper, we do not do so simply out of social cowardice or a failure to stand up for what we believe in. We do it, as did the apostle Paul, out of respect for the integrity of those who could not help but misunderstand this liberty and who therefore would be harmed by seeing it lived out in front of them.⁶⁶

In this passage, Yoder left unnamed those he thought would be "harmed" by seeing heterosexual activity manifested outside of marriage. Certainly, there were those close to home as well as Mennonite seminary constituents who, he pointed out to Marlin Miller, clung to conventional ideas about sexuality.⁶⁷ Yoder closed his essay: "If . . . we

freedom and dignity that Jesus had afforded to women, concluding: "It is obvious that on this basis woman finds a basis for her dignity which is far deeper and broader than much recent talk about 'liberation'."—Yoder, "What is 'Adultery of the Heart?'," 1975, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

65. For essays exploring Yoder's peace theology and his perspectives on mission, see *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz (Telford, Pa.: Cascadia, 2004), and *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, ed. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Westmont, Ill.: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2013).

66. Quotation from Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," p. 12. The notions of "familiar," "non-erotic," "non-genital" sexuality are used as synonyms.—Yoder to Marlin Miller and Ross Bender, "My Thoughts on Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality," April 19, 1977, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

67. Yoder to Miller and Bender, "My Thoughts on Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality," April 19, 1977, AMBS Marlin Miller John Howard Yoder Files; see also Yoder to Miller, memo titled "Employment and Related Matters," Jan. 25, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

live in too safe a society where no risks are taken and therefore no emotional rewards can be reached, . . . then we would need a specific argument and visible modeling to make clear the fruitfulness and propriety of a freer expression of affection.”⁶⁸ One of Yoder’s colleagues at Goshen Biblical Seminary, academic dean Ross T. Bender, responded heartily to the portion of Yoder’s essay that sounded a cautionary note, observing that Yoder’s advocacy for “considerably greater physical/emotional freedom” would be unacceptable to Mennonites, and for that matter, to other Christians. It would instead, Bender insisted, “surely bring the roof down on our heads.”⁶⁹

But Yoder cast such worries aside. As he took steps to engage women more freely on the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries campus, his professed interest in the dignity of singleness was overlaid with an interest in heterosexual relations outside of marriage. If roles for men and women were changing, he was willing to test his ideas by a literal laying on of hands. During one incident, while driving in 1973 to present lectures at a theology conference at Calvin College in Michigan, he took along as a passenger a young married Mennonite Biblical Seminary student he knew from campus. She was employed part-time as a writer for a Mennonite agency and had work to do at the conference. Earlier, Yoder had given her one of his thought-pieces on Christian family relationships, and during the car trip he told her he’d like to discuss it: What can we do, as Christian brothers and sisters, he asked. He reached over for her hand and held it, asking: “Is this O.K.? Can we do this?” She was surprised and did not immediately say no. For the past year that she had been at the seminary, he had been supportive of her interest in feminism and her intellectual aspirations. She valued him as a mentor. When he released his hand from hers, he placed it at her knee. As he drove on his hand moved up, grazing along her thigh. Shocked, she demanded that he stop, that he never do that again. He pulled his hand away. They arrived at their destination, participated in the conference program, and afterwards she warily rode back to Indiana with him. For the time being, it seemed, he was done testing ideas of Christian familiarity with her.⁷⁰

But there were plenty of women in Yoder’s world—in cars, offices, classrooms, and church settings—and he had time to hone his

68. Yoder, “Affective Sources for Singles,” 13.

69. Ross Bender, typescript response to John Howard Yoder, 1977, in the author’s possession, provided by Mary Ellen Meyer.

70. Maureen (pseudonym) interview with author. This was the first of two times during the 1970s that she experienced unwanted sexual behavior by Yoder. Years later, as an AMBS employee, she learned details of his more flagrant violations of other women, and kept her office door locked in the evenings, fearful of his movements around the campus.

methodologies. Some women who knew him in a variety of settings would assert that his personal attentiveness had been positive and broadening, and they appreciated his friendship.⁷¹ A generation later, professionals knowledgeable about sexual abuse would label Yoder's range of opportunistic approaches as "grooming" behaviors, subtle come-ons that suggested to whomever he was engaging with that he valued her intellect and collaboration. In a letter he had begun distributing in August 1974 which he titled "A Call for Aid," Yoder wrote:

I am being led into a kind of theological, ethical, and psychological study for which I need your help. . . . They are delicate themes, not for publication. . . . If, as my marriage paper argues, marriage is indissolubly monogamous and is publically celebrated and institutionally reinforced, – and if as my singleness paper pleads, singleness can be maturely chosen and publically celebrated, – then any two people of the two sexes, who have openly graduated from the age of courtship, whether by marriage or into singleness know where they stand and are free, as led by need, opportunity, and counsel, to relate for whatever interaction of womanliness/manliness is needed, with the clearly drawn line, publicly recognized, that excludes the genital.⁷²

Women reading the closing paragraphs of Yoder's letter would find a guileful appeal, prompting some of them to respond with sharp retorts and personal distancing, and others to move closer into his circle:

I send this to you because at one and the same time you represent to me 1) a sister given to me in Christian mutuality, 2) a person with experience in mature singleness, 3) a person of broad experience with others in single circumstances, 4) a mind able to respond critically to defensiveness. . . . This subject is at once personal friendship, personal counseling, and theological ethics.⁷³

Like another larger-than-life figure of the era, Henry Kissinger—who one year earlier had been quoted widely for saying "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac"—Yoder employed variants in exercising clout.⁷⁴ Appealing to intellect and friendship were persistent recruitment techniques as he reached out to women both on and off campus. Some

71. See, for example, letter from "A Concerned 'Sister'" to Marlin Miller, Dec. 6, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-8-001.

72. Yoder, "A Call for Aid," 1974, pp. 1-2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

73. *Ibid.*, 3.

74. Kissinger quoted in *The New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1973.

were students or employees of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart. Many others he met at academic and church conferences or on his periodic trips to Europe and elsewhere as part of his scholar/churchman portfolio. He received responses from a number of women who cut him off immediately. Ethel Yake Metzler, for example, a married professional mental health counselor in northern Indiana who had known Yoder since attending Goshen College with him three decades earlier, turned away his phone calls to her home in which he asked for lunch dates. She scrawled "This is ridiculous" on a paper he sent her on heterosexual intimacy outside of marriage, later reflecting that rejecting Yoder's advances was easier for her than for many others; she was the same age as he was and she considered him a peer, not an authority figure.⁷⁵

In his unpublished writings on Christian relationships, Yoder incorporated references to intentional communities, some of which were just coming into existence and had Mennonite affiliations. One of these was Reba Place in Evanston, Illinois, which Yoder visited on a number of occasions and where he conversed with elders. In 1973, Reba Place had issued community guidelines for heterosexual practice. While advocating prohibitions on premarital and extramarital intercourse, Reba Place's leaders noted that "each single person should have a combination of relationships within which their interpersonal needs can be met to an extent which is equivalent to that enjoyed by those who are happily married."⁷⁶ Yoder also engaged in conversations with members of the Fellowship of Hope, a Mennonite intentional community in the Elkhart neighborhood where he had earlier owned property, and to which he and his wife had sold their home during his term as president of Goshen Biblical Seminary.⁷⁷ Yoder was interested in the ethics of communal living, and all through the 1970s, he discussed with participants in intentional Christian living arrangements the biblical, economic, and cultural dimensions of their communities, which typically included both married and unmarried members. Yoder also served as a consultant to the Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C., and to the broader network known as "Community of Communities."⁷⁸

75. Ethel Yake Metzler, email to author, July 31, 2014.

76. "Friendship, Courtship and Marriage in Christian Community," typescript, Reba Place, Evanston, Illinois, c. 1973, in the author's possession.

77. The Yoders had then purchased and moved to another house on Benham Avenue in Elkhart, directly across from the seminary campus.

78. Keith Harder interview with author, July 12, 2014; Judy Harder interview with author, July 12, 2014; Anne Yoder, *What I Hold Precious*, 158; discussion of interpersonal relationships at Reba Place Fellowship appears in a three-page typescript, author unknown, titled "Friendship, Courtship and Marriage in Christian Community," undated.—A.M.B.S. Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Nation, *John*

In addition to traveling and consulting, Yoder was expanding his institutional and employment bases. In 1976, he negotiated a full-time faculty contract with the University of Notre Dame, where he had been teaching part time since the 1967-1968 academic year. Yoder's publications and lectures around the world had catapulted him to high standing and he wanted to be mindful, he told Marlin Miller, of "the best stewardship of my remaining time."⁷⁹ By shoring his base at Notre Dame, he hoped to affirm his independence from Mennonite denominational agencies, having worked with them for twenty-five years.⁸⁰ He saw his own "originality and efficacy as thinker and teacher," he told Miller, as bridging the interests of Mennonites and other Christian groups.⁸¹ Already, in his previous engagements with the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and other organizations, Yoder had encountered more satisfaction "than in the tent-making tasks of mission administration and seminary curriculum."⁸² Entangling his ecumenical platform was a liberating move.

Beginning in 1977 and continuing to his death in 1997, Yoder maintained full professor status at Notre Dame. As part of these employment adjustments, Miller arranged for him to continue teaching in Elkhart in a "permanent" adjunct position for which Goshen Biblical Seminary purchased some of Yoder's time from Notre Dame.⁸³ This dual school arrangement, which lasted seven more years until Yoder's forced resignation from Goshen Biblical Seminary, provides the backstory for Miller's man-to-man approach in dealing with Yoder's sexualized behavior on and around the seminary campus.⁸⁴

By the end of the 1970s, Miller was documenting a surge of disturbing incidents involving Yoder. During the 1978-1979 academic year, for example, Yoder's seminary office neighbor and colleague in New Testament studies, Willard Swartley, witnessed a distressing scene. Late

Howard Yoder, 23, n. 87. For brief histories of these communities, see www.rebaplacefellowship.org/Who_We_Are/History; www.fellowshipofhope.org/history; and www.sojo.net/about-us/history.

79. Yoder and Miller, joint document titled "Vocational Review of John H. Yoder," c. 1975, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

80. *Ibid.*, 3.

81. *Ibid.*, 2.

82. *Ibid.* For Yoder's employment history in the 1950s and 1960s, see Nation, *John Howard Yoder*, 21-22.

83. Miller to Yoder, "Adjunct Faculty Position/GBS," March 15, 1976, AMBS Marlin-Miller-John Howard Yoder Files; Yoder to David Burrell and Marlin Miller, Dec. 14, 1976, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Nation, *John Howard Yoder*, 23.

84. On the resignation, see Yoder to Miller, May 4, 1984, and Evelyn Shellenberger to Yoder, June 1, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

one evening Swartley arrived at the seminary to prepare for teaching the next day and flipped on a switch in his classroom. The lights revealed Yoder in a chair with a woman kneeling between his knees. A startled Swartley left the classroom. He was unsure of the identity of the woman, but believed she was a student. Returning to his office the next morning, he found that Yoder had left him a signed note in which he said that he had been helping—that is, counseling—the young woman. Swartley did not confront Yoder about this incident directly, but reported it to Miller, who replied that he was not surprised. As Swartley later remembered it, Miller told him that he had received letters about Yoder's activities with a number of women.⁸⁵

In this instance, there would be no immediate follow-up, but another set of encounters that academic year would have devastating consequences for one young woman. In the fall of 1978, Yoder recruited "Elena," a new student at A.M.B.S., to respond to an article he had written on sexuality in Christian contexts. She had recently completed a service term with Mennonite Central Committee and wanted to explore entering the ministry. In her first semester she took Yoder's "War, Peace, and Revolution" class. During a personal conversation, Yoder commented on her appearance in a way that left her confused. Soon her meetings with Yoder mutated from typical professor-student contacts to one-on-one tutorials, in which he demonstrated his theology of Christian relationships through touch and verbal persuasion. Having grown up in a family that had strictures against talking back, she felt overwhelmed by Yoder, who periodically abused her in his office, in a prayer room, and in her campus living quarters. These encounters were followed by letters in which she repeatedly wrote, "This doesn't make sense!" He replied with a barrage of notes and letters delivered to her student mailbox, explaining exactly how she was wrong in her thinking.⁸⁶

Elena became aware of two additional students and another seminary-affiliated woman who were also part of Yoder's "sister community."⁸⁷ She later recalled that he wanted to instruct her both physically and intellectually, and remembered that "he would defeat me every time" she tried to dispute his sexualized ministrations. She tried to gain some perspective by talking with another young woman who was one of the "sisters" and found mirrored confusion: "In the community of

85. Swartley interview with author, June 2, 2014; Ted Koontz, "John H. Yoder and AMBS: A Chronology," Feb. 6, 2012, in author's possession. Swartley had been a student of Yoder's in 1960-1962; see Swartley, *Send Forth Your Light* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2007), 290, n. 42.

86. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author.

87. *Ibid.*

sisters, we didn't understand—why is he touching our breasts?"⁸⁸ Despite professing that what he was doing was "familial" and "non-erotic," Yoder engaged with Elena in a brief act of genital penetration, ostensibly to show her that intimate relations did not have to be coercive, that "men don't have to be rapists."⁸⁹

Elena suffered a loss of self-confidence and whatever sense of sexual boundary maintenance she might have had before arriving at the seminary. In desperation she spoke again with one of the "sisters," a woman who Yoder had suggested might participate with him and Elena in a three-way meeting. Elena and her co-student contemplated Yoder's proposition but then told each other that *he* was wrong, that *his ideas* were wrong, and their rebuff ended Yoder's physical contact with them.⁹⁰

But there would be a long and twisted coda. In the late spring of 1979, Yoder was preparing to leave for Europe, and he asked Elena to record in writing everything he had taught her about Christian sexual relationships. She complied and mailed it to him. Within weeks, Yoder's wife, Anne, discovered Elena's letter and took it to Marlin Miller as further evidence of her husband's extracurricular activities. That summer, the G.B.S. president called Elena into his office. In shock and shame, she stood as Miller showed her the letter she had written, and she listened in disbelief as he told her: "I have the authority to expel you from the seminary."⁹¹ She nodded, and after leaving Miller's office, sank into depression.

Miller, the theologian at the helm of her church's seminary, had threatened her with expulsion. That had been his response to written evidence that Yoder was engaged in explicit sexual experimentation with selected students; the letter she had written and sent to Yoder at his request, just weeks before, had been clear on those details. Elena stayed on campus for the upcoming school year, even sitting in on a class offered by President Miller. But ultimately, she later recalled: "He didn't

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid. In the 1970s, the brief act noted here would not have been considered rape by prevailing legal definitions. Understandings of rape have evolved significantly, however, as have considerations about power inequalities, particularly in religious institutions. Writing in 1990, for example, G. Lloyd Rediger, a Presbyterian pastoral counselor and consultant on sexual abuse, noted: "Consent to sexual relations with unwanted partners . . . does not eliminate the fact of rape, it demonstrates how poorly our society has understood the needs and rights of women."—*Ministry and Sexuality*, 65. For a discussion of how definitions of rape are evolving, see Michael Kimmel and Gloria Steinem, "'Yes' is Better Than 'No,'" *The New York Times*, Sept. 5, 2014, A-23.

90. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author.

91. Ibid.

have to expel me. I did his job for him.”⁹² Concentrating on studies was difficult, and she dropped out of one class after another. She departed Elkhart at the end of her second year without a degree. Her sojourn at the Mennonite seminary had been darkened by Yoder’s abuse, by Miller’s blaming, and by her own shattered sense of self. These experiences, she later recalled, set her up for further abuse by several other male predators who sensed her vulnerability. In the longer term—over the next several decades—this legacy, including debilitating anxiety and depression, foreshortened her vocation in Christian ministry.⁹³

Elena’s experiences in 1979 highlight not only the egregious behavior of Yoder toward some women on the A.M.B.S. campus, but also the power that Miller was using to enforce others’ silence. For the time being, Miller was still focused on Yoder’s troubled marriage. This concern dated back to the 1975-1976 academic year when Miller had been appointed seminary president. Shortly before, Anne Yoder had discovered correspondence of her husband’s that provided evidence of his sexual involvements with women in the U.S. and abroad. Confronting him, she had also reached out for emotional support from her sister-in-law, Mary Ellen (Yoder) Meyer, her husband’s only sibling.

Meyer, a nurse, was well-acquainted with the seminary community through her brother’s longstanding faculty status and her own friendships among northern Indiana Mennonites. Initially assuming that her brother’s extramarital involvements were consensual, Meyer had encouraged her sister-in-law to talk with President Miller, hoping he might exert influence over John to attend to his marriage. Anne Yoder did appeal to Miller for help. He initially conceived of the Yoders’ problems as “domestic” and private, and he responded discreetly. By 1976, both Miller and Meyer were trying to persuade Yoder how hurtful his behavior was to his wife and, potentially, to others.⁹⁴ But despite several years of on-again, off-again four-way conversations between the Yoders, President Miller, and Mary Ellen Meyer, as well as marital counseling by a local psychiatric social worker, Yoder’s sexualized behaviors toward many women not only continued, but intensified.⁹⁵

As part of Miller’s fraternal efforts to work alongside members of the Yoder family in dealing with Yoder’s behavior, he relied for counsel on

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*

94. Mary Ellen Meyer interview with author, July 24, 2014.

95. Marlin Miller memo to John Howard Yoder, “Correspondence Issues,” Dec. 5, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; John Howard Yoder memo to Marlin Miller, “Apologies and Gratitude,” Dec. 7, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder's brother-in-law, Albert Meyer, married to Mary Ellen. Miller and Meyer were close friends. Meyer served as head of the Mennonite Board of Education, which had oversight of G.B.S. and other Mennonite-affiliated schools, and he attended the seminary's board meetings. For eight years, from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, Miller nevertheless shielded the G.B.S. board from awareness of Yoder's sexual behaviors. It remained a family matter.

Meanwhile, as Mary Ellen Meyer learned about her brother's network of "sisters" and details about some of his physical involvements, her distress and apprehension deepened. Arguing with him, rejecting his theological and intellectual premises, she concluded that his seduction of some women, and actions that included all-night experiences of nudity and bodily contact, were grievous distortions of Christianity. She learned, both firsthand and through information shared by Marlin Miller, how Yoder had tried to enlist women for his project and that a number of them had refused. In 1979 she wrote: "I am surprised at his naivety that seemed not to realize this could not all be kept secret forever."⁹⁶ "As this comes out," she added regretfully, his insistence on framing his behavior as cutting-edge Christian sexual ethics would undermine much of his theological legacy.⁹⁷ She lost heart in the project of reforming her theologian brother, and pulled back from what she had come to regard as a deceptive discourse. By 1980, she had concluded that Yoder's "experiment" was no experiment; he had not incorporated any men into his study, and the harm to many people was all too apparent. She had not succeeded in convincing her brother of this, but for nearly four more years, Marlin Miller would remain at the task.⁹⁸

Miller had hoped that Mary Ellen Meyer would help him correspond with some of the women with whom Yoder had had "intimate relations . . . in the last several years." The seminary president envisioned sending his own letters to the women criticizing Yoder's ideas and practices regarding Christian sexuality. Miller anticipated sending these, along with letters written by Yoder and his wife, expressing Yoder's intent to work with each woman toward "mutual correction, forgiveness, and eventual reconciliation."⁹⁹ But this plan never materialized.

96. Mary Ellen Meyer, typescript correspondence, 1979, in her possession.

97. *Ibid.*

98. Mary Ellen Meyer, handwritten correspondence, Feb. 27, 1980, in her possession.

99. Quotations from Marlin Miller to John Yoder, Anne Yoder, and Mary Ellen Meyer, Sept. 28, 1979, AMBS Marlin-Miller-John Howard Yoder Files; see also John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, "Proposed Circle Letter to Sisters," Oct. 1, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Marlin Miller memo to John Howard Yoder, "Correspondence Issues," Dec. 5, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder questioned whether Miller's letter-writing scheme was intended to goad each Christian "sister" to apologize for the sin of participating in an adulterous relationship.¹⁰⁰ Yoder rejected the notion that he had engaged in adultery because he regarded his personalized attention to women as therapeutic. Genital penetration without ejaculation, by Yoder's definition, was not sexual intercourse. He regarded as permissible the activities that he called "familial" or "familiar" activity with Christian "sisters," and he defined monogamy as simply remaining married to one's spouse.¹⁰¹ Further, Yoder pointed out problems likely to emerge from Miller's letter-writing; divulging the women's names, Yoder advised, would violate confidentiality.¹⁰² Besides, did Miller really intend, Yoder asked, "to inform the sisters on the less involved levels that my views led me farther with others than with them?"¹⁰³ The seminary president ought not to play one correspondent off against another, Yoder intimated. Yet of his numerous objections, each was subordinate to one key point. You "demand," he chided Miller, "that I bow to the majority view and that it comes from the heart."¹⁰⁴ On the matter of mapping a new Christian sexual ethics, Yoder was not conceding.

Into the 1980s, Miller was determined to keep word of his dispute with Yoder from spreading. Exchanging lengthy memos with his colleague about sexual mores in biblical and contemporary times—in addition to investigating Yoder's specific behaviors—was time-consuming and emotionally draining.¹⁰⁵ Still, Miller considered his adversary his mentor, and he regarded Yoder's theological contributions on nonviolence and discipleship to be of incalculable value. Convincing Yoder of his errors had become the hidden agenda of Miller's seminary presidency.

100. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Nov. 3, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Nov. 21, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

101. Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author; Marcus Smucker interview with author, July 7, 2014. On Yoder's standard for monogamy, see "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John H. Yoder, March 14, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

102. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Oct. 1, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

103. Yoder to Miller, Nov. 3, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

104. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Oct. 30, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

105. Some of Miller's time investment involved research, including discussing theological and psychological currents with Mennonite seminarians and with psychiatrists. Marlin Miller, typescript to John Howard Yoder, Aug. 13, 1979, twelve pages, copy in the author's possession, provided by Mary Ellen Meyer, p. 10.

Miller had a range of concerns in keeping Yoder's secret. Given the strains in the Yoders' marriage, it was possible that Anne Yoder would become so angry that she would expose her husband's behaviors to the broader church. It was also conceivable that some woman, known or unknown to Miller, might tell her story publicly. Yet another risk lay in exposure by aggrieved husbands. By 1979, Miller had become aware of marriages in trouble because of Yoder's actions in North America and on other continents; a prominent theologian had written to inform Miller of two women in South Africa whom Yoder had violated sexually.¹⁰⁶ And it was unclear to Miller how discreet Yoder himself would be, for, while he had not published or spoken publicly about his views on marriage, singleness, or Christian sexuality, it was possible he still might.¹⁰⁷ In his ongoing communications with Miller, Yoder appeared as interested in perpetuating the process of theological debate as pushing toward any resolution. "You yourself," he lectured Miller, "would not be satisfied with my simply yielding and saying 'have it your way' without valid process."¹⁰⁸

Taking these variables into account, Miller addressed Yoder's prerogatives seriously and systematically. In March 1979 he asked Yoder to "cease all touch in counseling women" and to adopt an open-door office policy at the seminary.¹⁰⁹ Miller also initiated conversations with former students about Yoder, inquiring about his behavior toward them. Meanwhile, Miller and Yoder agreed that they wished to avoid "potential for blackmail, for scandal."¹¹⁰ They discussed the merits of what Yoder termed "liquidating your secret file" of correspondence, both unsolicited letters and those resulting from Miller's investigations.¹¹¹

Miller did destroy an unknown number of letters in 1980, but not before hand-transcribing a catalog of what he had learned from seminary alumnae and from women living at a distance. He summarized and dated letters and calls he had received—mostly from English-speakers, but also some in German and French—about women's encounters with

106. Heggen email to the author, Aug. 3, 2014.

107. John Howard Yoder memo to Marlin Miller, Dec. 31, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

108. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Dec. 6, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

109. "Understandings Re: Behavioral Commitments," typescript, c. 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

110. Quotation from Yoder in memo to Miller, Dec. 31, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

111. Quotation from Yoder in memo to Miller, Oct. 23, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder. Miller's diary-like entries included details in the margins about his informants' marital status and whether they had reported "total disrobing" or "partial penetration," as well as their rationales for engaging with Yoder in his theological project.¹¹² Miller kept this compendium at home, not in his seminary office.¹¹³

Remarkably, Miller developed no plan to dismiss Yoder. Instead, he used the data he had gathered to repudiate his colleague's theology. In a twelve-page letter, formulated with a preamble and four sections, Miller told Yoder he was responding "primarily in the context of fraternal discernment and debate rather [than] employer-employee negotiations."¹¹⁴ Extending his critique to all of Yoder's unpublished papers on Christian sexuality, Miller declared:

I am convinced that your definitional and structural considerations are sufficiently skewed to allow for principles and practices which are less than biblical, undermine Christian marriage, and allow for a measure of marital infidelity short of physical adultery understood narrowly as sexual intercourse.¹¹⁵

Yoder's arguments about helping women had, conversely, produced pain. "[Y]our practice in the last several years," Miller argued, "has caused major offense . . . and in every case that I know about caused confusion, guilt, and crises."¹¹⁶

Further, Miller refuted Yoder's justifications head-on, objecting to Yoder's "implied analogy between Jesus' conduct" and Yoder's own.¹¹⁷ He dismissed Yoder's notion that "all the 'traditional taboos' about degrees of familiarity between sexes can be classified . . . as defenses against the perception of sexuality as a wild beast."¹¹⁸ Miller identified the two locales where he believed Yoder's sexual experimentation to have been most devastating—in Strasbourg, France, the urban headquarters for Mennonite World Conference, and at A.M.B.S. in Elkhart—and he lambasted Yoder for "acting out your ideas in the context of private twosomes rather than giving at least equal energy and

112. Marlin Miller, "notes from correspondence which has been destroyed," handwritten, 22 pages, c. 1980.—AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

113. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, March 31, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

114. Miller, typescript to Yoder, Aug. 13, 1979, p. 1, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

115. *Ibid.*, 5.

116. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

117. *Ibid.*, 9.

118. *Ibid.*

creativity to developing . . . appropriate community structures." Miller clinched his argument:

You have thus made yourself in fact legislator, judge, and pope in your own case where the church's discernment of your gifts, your professional expertise, and experience have least prepared you. . . . you are caught in a web of self-rationalization.¹¹⁹

Miller's argumentation was sharp; Yoder's rebuttal, dismissive. The two men's intellectual fracas would spin on, propelled by Miller's dogged resolve and Yoder's persistence. Meanwhile, these exchanges enabled the continued abuse of women who were living and studying on the seminary campus but were not privy to the men's debate. Responding to Miller, Yoder reminded his employer of the high calling of Christian ethicists:

Intellectually the great challenge—is how to deal with a basic challenge to an entire cultural mind set. . . . Numerous of your [arguments] represent simply an appeal to the consensus of our respectable culture. I know what that consensus teaches, for I am its product and its victim. I knew its teachings before I began testing an alternative set of axioms. I did not come to reject them through simple rebellion or disdainful superiority. I knew at the outset that I am "voted down." Therefore any appeals to that consensus . . . or otherwise documenting its hold on our minds, is at best circular, and at worst it supports my analysis.¹²⁰

In this exchange, Yoder posited himself as society's "product and its victim," struggling against banality in the very Christian community that pegged him as spokesman and exemplar.

In the spring of 1980, Yoder drew up a seven-page draft aimed at persuading Miller that his ideas were morally justifiable. In this document he provided a defense that he would offer repeatedly to Mennonite interlocutors, that whenever "women declined further relationship, I . . . respected that."¹²¹ He defended what he called "the essence of the experimental method," noting that "there are experiences of being 'wrong' which clarify that one is also somewhat right."¹²² Responding to charges that women had been hurt, not helped, by his sexual explorations, Yoder reached for analogy from medical ethics: "Only by the surgeon's risking some failures, can it be determined for

119. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

120. Yoder to Miller, Dec. 31, 1979, 1.

121. John Howard Yoder, handwritten draft, 7 pages, Spring 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

122. *Ibid.*

which kinds of patients heart surgery or organ transplant is a risk worth running."¹²³ Turning to questions about his motives, he retorted:

Was I driven by an obsession? Was I seeking to hurt my family? Did I coerce persons or bowl over resistance? On this . . . no confirming testimony has come in. The "obsession" interpretation has been weakened by my surviving a year of privation and punishment.¹²⁴

Yoder was referring to "discipline" by the G.B.S. president, including the admonition to keep his office door open whenever female students were present and to stop initiating new "sisters" into his sexual ethics project.

As Miller negotiated a new employment contract with Yoder in 1980, he added several stipulations. First, Yoder was to refrain from the explicitly sexual activities that his December 1979 "'defanging' of the 'beast'" memo had identified. These prohibitions were in effect "world-wide and at all times," not just on the seminary campus, because, Miller told Yoder, he was a representative of A.M.B.S. wherever and whenever he traveled.¹²⁵ Further, Yoder was to inform Miller whenever he spoke publicly or wrote on sexuality, marriage, and singleness. This would not be bowing to censorship, Miller assured him, but would guarantee "open conversation and debate with seminary colleagues."¹²⁶ Miller wanted to make these behavioral restrictions contractual, but Yoder responded by questioning which of multiple "hats" the seminary president was wearing: Employer? Fraternal counselor? Yoder added that he might prefer to change jobs than abide by behavioral conformity.¹²⁷

Throughout his dispute with Miller, Yoder evinced what some clinicians in the emerging field of religious sexual abuse prevention would identify as "the star factor," the internalizing of a theological framework in which a perpetrator comes to regard himself as such an unusually privileged person that he is exempt from moral principles. In these instances, abusers may believe they are called to do noble work and feel justified in making their own rules.¹²⁸ While Yoder's arbiter, Miller, sensed this, the star-quality of Yoder's theological influence

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid.

125. Miller told Yoder to refrain from categories "D through H." — Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, March 31, 1980; see also revised memo, April 26, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

126. Ibid., March 31, 1980.

127. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Jan. 25, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

128. Rediger, *Ministry and Sexuality*, 17.

blinded as much as it illuminated. And biblicism was still Miller's main frame for addressing Yoder.

In seeking to restrict Yoder's behaviors both on and off the seminary campus, Miller was now acknowledging that reliance on Matthew 18:15 for confronting his brother had been inadequate. The next step, the sixteenth verse of Matthew 18, beckoned: "*But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.*"¹²⁹ So, as a new decade began, President Miller assembled a small group of seminary advisors to join him in addressing the problem.

A COVENANT MADE AND BROKEN

By mutual agreement, in the fall of 1980 Miller and Yoder broadened their disputation to include two G.B.S. board members—board chair Marcus Smucker, a pastor, and Evelyn Shellenberger, a nurse practitioner—as well as a seminary colleague and Old Testament scholar, Millard Lind. Together with Miller and Yoder they met semi-regularly for three years in an effort to apply Matthew 18:16.¹³⁰ In October 1980, Miller drafted a three-page "Covenantal Agreement" between himself, Yoder, Smucker, Shellenberger, and Lind. This document affirmed Yoder's continued employment at G.B.S. and noted that no punitive measures would be applied. However, the covenant required Yoder to initiate steps toward healing and reconciliation wherever his actions had caused injury.¹³¹ Covenant members agreed to not speak of this to others and regarded their agreement as the "successful conclusion of the second step of the Matthew 18 'rule of Christ' process, namely the step of the brother's having heard the two or three witnesses."¹³² In authoring the document, Miller applied Matthew 18:16 to the group's promise of confidentiality, which he believed would serve seminary interests. "The matter therefore," he wrote, "is not 'told to the church.'"¹³³ Miller was invoking biblical justification for withholding from G.B.S.'s board of

129. Mt. 18:16, RSV.

130. By 1982, the Covenant Group had limited its meetings to annual gatherings, in which members reevaluated and renewed their commitment to the covenant. Marlin Miller, "Summary of Agenda and Agreements: Covenant Group Meeting," Aug. 21, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

131. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Millard Lind, Marcus Smucker, and John Howard Yoder, Oct. 25, 1981, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

132. "Covenantal Agreement," Oct. 22, 1980, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

133. *Ibid.*

overseers information about Yoder's past, as well as the new conditions put in place.

Three members of the Covenant Group—Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind—were disinclined to challenge Yoder's unorthodox views of sexuality. When the group met, they listened as Miller and Yoder debated, and Smucker later remembered that Miller did not divulge his own detailed knowledge about A.M.B.S. students and other women who had been harmed by Yoder. Decades later, Smucker expressed regret that, as G.B.S. board chair in the early 1980s and as a member of the Covenant Group, he had not been more proactive: "I trusted Marlin, but his judgment failed. And the issue of confidentiality was very vigorously pushed by John."¹³⁴ At Covenant Group meetings, Yoder claimed that as an ethicist he was at the forefront of a sexual desensitization endeavor deserving wider testing. "Crazy as I thought it was," Smucker recalled, "I thought *he* [Yoder] believed it," and gradually Smucker realized that the two theologians' dispute had been long in the making.¹³⁵ Only dimly did he grasp the stakes for women—students, spouses, secretaries, and others—at the seminary.

For a brief time, in the spring of 1982, the Covenant Group ceded the question of whether Yoder's ideas merited further testing to a new set of listeners. Miller and Yoder agreed on a short list of names of Mennonite men and women from the Elkhart community and invited these persons to serve on a "Confidential Task Force." Over six meetings in a small seminary classroom, Yoder stood at the blackboard, diagramming, instructing, and inviting his listeners to consider how married, single, and divorced Christians might benefit from a new "familial" ethics that rejected contemporary thinking—as summarized by Yoder—of sexuality as "a beast or a slippery slope which is intrinsically wild, uncontrollable."¹³⁶ Yoder told the task force that he envisioned some Christians to be ready for a new paradigm modeled on "the way Jesus dealt with women."¹³⁷ According to ground rules set by Yoder and Miller, the task force was to consider only theoretical perspectives, not actual experience. Thus Yoder never referenced his experimentation with "sisters." Sitting in on these seminars were a local psychiatrist and an elder from the intentional community Fellowship of Hope, as well as President Miller, who for the time being held back his critique. The exercise was inconsequential. As the school year ended, the task force

134. Marcus Smucker interview with author, July 7, 2014.

135. *Ibid.*

136. "Summary of Ad Hoc Consultation," March 17, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

137. *Ibid.*

disbanded, with one member advising Yoder to abandon his theoretical agenda and work on strengthening his marriage.¹³⁸

Through the early 1980s, Miller's reliance on the covenant to police Yoder's behavior introduced a set of new difficulties. The first and most pressing was how to carry out the promise of confidentiality. Miller and others of the Covenant Group faced mounting questions by seminary constituents and church leaders from throughout the denomination and beyond. As new understandings about sexual harassment and abuse gained currency across Mennonite institutions, Miller's covenantal protections of Yoder functioned as a relic from an earlier era.

The second problem arose from the biblical mandate that one who offends should take steps toward healing and reconciliation. Members of the Covenant Group anticipated that this would require conversations between Yoder and others. When Miller, in an effort to jump-start this process, contacted individuals whom he knew to have been violated, he discovered that they were unwilling to participate. The seminary's interest in arranging reconciliatory meetings for its own peace theologian ran afoul of the women's interests. What victim of sexual abuse wished for face-to-face contact with Yoder, either alone or in the presence of his institutional backers? Miller turned up no one—not seminary employees, alumnae, or acquaintances in the broader community—and eventually he conceded that “they are afraid of unpleasant or harmful consequences, either from John or from broader damage to their reputations.”¹³⁹

Yoder turned this to his advantage, intimating to Miller that the covenant was not living up to its promises. How could he apologize to accusers in the shadows? Yoder did not deny his history of sexualized relationships with women, but maintained that he had never intended harm. Why, he asked, should he remain under disciplinary restrictions if there was no one available to hear that he regretted having misinterpreted some women's cues about their willingness? Oddly, Yoder phrased his episodic misreading of women's readiness to give consent as “falling off the bike”—that is, something that was regrettable but unintentional.¹⁴⁰ “In terms of the reconciliation mandate of Matt. 18,”

138. Judy Harder to John Howard Yoder, May 2, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller, “Summary of Agenda and Agreements, Covenant Group Meeting,” Aug. 21, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001

139. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Marlin Miller to Victor Stoltzfus, March 20, 1991, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

140. Shellenberger interview with author; Ted Koontz, “John H. Yoder and AMBS: A Chronology,” 6.

Yoder insisted, “we cannot proceed in the absence of accusers.”¹⁴¹ It was a conundrum that, for years, provided the centerpiece of his arguments with Miller.

A third problem proved equally intractable. Yoder had agreed to refrain from a litany of sexual activities that, over the better part of a decade, had become a principal mode for interacting with women. As a member of the Covenant Group, he was not supposed to falter. But the restrictions proved burdensome, and Yoder complained that, as a part-time faculty member at Goshen Biblical Seminary, “it is not clear that I should be 100% under GBS’ moral control.”¹⁴² Meanwhile, when Miller tried to question Yoder about new accusations that came his way, Yoder insisted that he was simply corresponding with “sisters” from the past who welcomed his attention.¹⁴³ Miller’s files on his colleague again grew thick with correspondence, chiefly complaints about Yoder’s behavior.¹⁴⁴ One acquaintance alerted Miller to rumors that Yoder “does in fact, by his example, encourage extra-marital affairs as a way of life” and told the G.B.S. president pointedly that “if you don’t condone them, you’ll have to address them, because the constituency reads silence on the issues as consent.”¹⁴⁵

In the midst of this flow of letters came a singular one laying charges of sexual harassment directly on Miller’s desk. Ruth Krall, a former student at A.M.B.S. and clinical counselor who had taught at Goshen College, wrote to Miller of her growing awareness from the late 1970s onward of the “serious problem” at the seminary and of Miller’s continuing difficulties in stopping Yoder’s behavior. Although Krall had not experienced sexual harassment personally, as a clinician she had heard painful accounts about Yoder’s abuses. For several years she and colleagues from Goshen College had been in conversation with faculty women at nearby campuses—the University of Notre Dame and St.

141. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Evelyn Shellenberger, Millard Lind, Marcus Smucker, Dec. 8, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Yoder to Miller, Shellenberger, Lind, Smucker, Dec. 19, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

142. John Howard Yoder memo to “concerned sisters,” Oct. 21, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

143. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, handwritten letter, April 10, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

144. See, for example, correspondence to Marlin Miller, Nov. 10, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

145. Correspondence to Marlin Miller, Aug. 22, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Mary's College—to share concerns about Yoder's unwelcome sexual advances and to strategize about confronting the problem.¹⁴⁶

Krall's critique, leveled in 1982, was broader than the perspectives Miller had considered previously. The trouble was not simply one faculty member's behavior. Krall framed the problem as institutional, exacerbated by a male-dominated board, administration, teaching staff, and student body. At the seminary, male prerogative was simply taken for granted. Krall told Miller bluntly: "Until the agenda of sexism is taken seriously, you may not ever hear the story of sexual harassment. Sexism and sexual violence against women are so intertwined at this moment in history that it is impossible to separate them."¹⁴⁷ The persistence of institutionalized sexism aided and abetted sexual harassment, which had destructive implications, she added:

When women, in any way, are considered to be subordinate, inferior, or the sexual property of men, sexual harassment can occur. As such is it an act of violence against women. It is a most devastating method of putting women in their place. Because our sexuality and its enactment is so vital to our identity, any exploitation by the powerful towards the less powerful reverberates one thousand fold.¹⁴⁸

For Miller, Krall's letter raised the stakes. Yoder was now disregarding parts of the covenantal agreement, and his actions threatened to wreak havoc on the seminary's reputation. New revelations of sexual violations, fast as they were coming in, could not be controlled.

Although Miller failed to absorb Krall's feminist perspective that sexual harassment constituted violence against women, he could not miss the signs that Mennonite women academics were concerned about female students' and other women's safety. They had interpreted the problem in a new way, and their solutions were far different from Miller's. Krall and other women were mobilizing against patriarchy by intensifying communications. Miller soon learned the truth of Krall's parting challenge, that "the women's network in the Mennonite Church knows more about this problem than you do." At the next general assembly of the Mennonite Church, a convention held in August 1983 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, women gathered privately to discuss Yoder's behavior and the Elkhart seminary's condoning of it. Some approached

146. Ruth E. Krall to Marlin Miller, Sept. 9, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Krall, *The Elephants in God's Living Room*, Vol. 3, 2014, <http://ruthkrall.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-Elephants-in-God%E2%80%99s-Living-Room-Vol-3-%C2%A9.pdf>; Ruth Krall, email to author, July 29, 2014.

147. Krall to Miller, Sept. 9, 1982.

148. *Ibid.*

church administrators to report what they knew and urged intervention, calling for restrictions on Yoder's movements around the seminary, at college campuses, and at other institutions.¹⁴⁹

Prodded by their advocacy, Miller made further inquiries and heard from two young women at the University of Notre Dame who had suffered abuse by Yoder in his South Bend office and elsewhere on the campus. One of the women had reported Yoder's behavior to a counselor in the student services office at Notre Dame; with several other women, she had contemplated a lawsuit against Yoder. Although the Notre Dame students had not pursued legal action, their detailed accounts of Yoder's abuse—along with escalating reports from Mennonite constituents and the possibility that other aggrieved women might bring a lawsuit against the seminary—convinced Miller that the covenant with Yoder was broken.¹⁵⁰ From Miller's perspective, the time had come to apply the full freight of the Matthew 18 passage, verse seventeen: "*If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church . . .*"¹⁵¹

SEMINARY RESIGNATION

During the fall of 1983, Miller and members of the Covenant Group prepared to recommend Yoder's dismissal to the G.B.S. board of overseers, which Miller envisioned as the third and final step of Matthew 18, although "tell it to the church," in this case, meant sharing confidential information with male-dominated seminary boards. Miller's counterpart at A.M.B.S., Mennonite Biblical Seminary president Henry Poettcker, had recently heard from constituents about Yoder's sexual misconduct, and it was only a matter of time before M.B.S.'s board of trustees would learn of these developments. Yoder reacted sharply. He wrote to women friends that the Covenant Group was now placing him under new limitations, including no further touching of any women outside his own family. These and other "sweeping legalistic restrictions," Yoder added, were due to complaints by unknown accusers, as well as gossip in "'women's movement' circles in which my

149. *Ibid.*; Miller to Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. The 1983 convention in Bethlehem was a joint gathering of the Mennonite Church, with which Goshen Biblical Seminary was affiliated, and the General Conference Mennonite Church, with which Mennonite Biblical Seminary was affiliated.

150. Miller to Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, Dec. 19, 1983; AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Gordon Dyck, notes of meeting of representatives from AMBS, Prairie Street Mennonite Church, and Church Life Commission, Dec. 18, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

151. Mt. 18:17, RSV.

relationships with certain persons are interpreted as harassment.”¹⁵² Yoder decried the seminary's tilt against his continued employment; he could not, he said, respond to the accuracy of charges without knowing who had made them. In his estimation, the seminary had flouted due process and violated the letter and spirit of Matthew 18. “How much blood,” he demanded to know, “do my unnamed accusers want?”¹⁵³

Through the remainder of the academic year, tensions between Miller and Yoder escalated, with Miller concluding that Yoder's continued pursuit of proscribed activities in the past few years had not abated, “depending on how one defines intercourse.”¹⁵⁴ Yoder told Miller that he had no reason to change his ideas about sexual ethics.¹⁵⁵ But as seminary leaders considered their options for terminating him, Yoder began to speak of resigning and negotiating a severance.¹⁵⁶

By late 1983, Yoder was arranging for a leave of absence from Notre Dame for the upcoming academic year. His status as a full-time professor there meant, in practical terms, that the Elkhart seminary would be losing an adjunct faculty member. However, no one would regard his departure from G.B.S. as routine, so both Yoder and Miller turned their attention to administrative details: When should Yoder leave? What should the seminary board and other constituents be told? How should the department head of theological studies at Notre Dame be informed? What should be shared with Mennonite agencies? What of the women who were asking questions about A.M.B.S.'s and Notre Dame's policies? On these matters, Yoder drafted proposals that in his view represented a “‘political compromise’ to . . . reduce the damages.”¹⁵⁷

Negotiations and compromise would not come easily, however. Yoder continued to insist that due process had been violated, and he told Miller and members of the Covenant Group—by now, functioning as a seminary committee to work out his severance—that by resigning he

152. Quotations from Yoder memo to Marlin Miller, Evelyn Shellenberger, and Marcus Smucker, Dec. 17, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Yoder memo to “concerned sisters,” Oct. 21, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

153. Quotation from Yoder memo to Miller, Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind, Dec. 8, 1983; see also Yoder to Miller, Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind, Dec. 17, 1983.

154. Miller to Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, p. 3.

155. *Ibid.*

156. Marlin Miller, “Draft for Brainstorming,” ca. Oct. 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

157. Yoder to Miller, Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind, Dec. 17, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

was doing the seminary a favor to "help us all out of a bind."¹⁵⁸ Marcus Smucker, who had left G.B.S.'s board chairmanship to join the seminary faculty, took exception to Yoder's portrayal of himself as a victim of injustice. Smucker expressed chagrin that he and others had waited so long to act decisively against Yoder. "In particular," Smucker told him, "Marlin has invested heavily with his time, energy, and personal anguish to try to make this work out in your behalf. Somehow his concern and interest for your welfare seems to have escaped your awareness, instead you appear to be translating this into primarily an authority issue."¹⁵⁹

With these conflicts simmering, neither Yoder nor Miller relied on legal counsel. Arrangements for Yoder's separation were handled in-house, based on written agreements made early in 1984. Yoder informed the chair of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame, Richard McBrien, that he would be leaving his adjunct position at Goshen Biblical Seminary and that the decision had "delicate dimensions." Yoder added: "I and the others in the Mennonite context would be grateful if you could avoid giving the matter unnecessary prominence."¹⁶⁰ McBrien complied, and Miller—mindful of recent reports from current and former Notre Dame students as well as a staff counselor—warned Yoder that "some [women] there talk among themselves and tell others to 'look out for some of the priests and Prof. Y.'"¹⁶¹ Assuming that his own administrative problems would abate once Yoder left the seminary, Miller cautioned him not to jeopardize his employment at Notre Dame.¹⁶²

Yoder resigned effective June 1, 1984, and no publicity attended G.B.S.'s board action to accept the resignation. If asked about it, G.B.S. board members and seminary representatives were to say that the decision had been reached by mutual agreement as a solution to

158. See, for example, John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, March 26, 1984, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and John Howard Yoder to Marcus Smucker and Marlin Miller, April 13, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

159. Quotation from Marcus Smucker to John Howard Yoder, ca. Jan. 12, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Marcus Smucker to Marlin Miller, John Howard Yoder, Evelyn Shellenberger, and Millard Lind, April 5, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

160. John Howard Yoder to Richard McBrien, Feb. 6, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

161. Quotation from Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, Feb. 3, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

162. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, Feb. 2, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. See also Marlin Miller to Richard McBrien, June 14, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

longstanding issues, and that neither the institution nor Yoder planned to make a statement.¹⁶³ Signaling silence in a pact with Yoder that he would later regret, Miller stipulated that “GBS will not take the initiative to inform responsible persons in the church or in church agencies if not asked.”¹⁶⁴ If representatives of church agencies *did* ask for explanations, Miller planned to confer with G.B.S.’s board chair—a post held by Evelyn Shellenberger—and with Yoder. When, in late spring 1984, the G.B.S./M.B.S. boards met in joint executive session, Miller announced that Yoder was resigning in acknowledgement of sexual involvements with women on several continents. A G.B.S. board member asked what Yoder thought he had been accomplishing through his activities, and Miller replied: “He was trying to prove you could ‘tame the beast.’”¹⁶⁵ Miller asked the assembled group of nearly twenty board members to keep the reason for Yoder’s forced resignation confidential, a request that drew sharp responses. Some M.B.S. board members were critical of Miller for withholding the damaging information for so long.¹⁶⁶ How should Mennonite Church- and General Conference-related agencies deal with upcoming speaking engagements by Yoder that were already planned? Maintaining confidentiality seemed impossible, and, to some, ill-advised. But in the coming years, seminary insiders would remain mostly mum.¹⁶⁷

Yoder’s departure was not a clean break. As a former faculty member who lived across the street from the seminary, he retained a key and campus mailbox, an arrangement that was to be reviewed periodically.¹⁶⁸ He also continued to use the seminary library. These logistics became conflictual as word filtered back to Miller that Yoder was telling others that his resignation from the seminary lacked “due process.” In 1983, worried about the potential for public scandal, Miller had urged Yoder to decline an invitation to speak at the eleventh Mennonite World

163. For an example, see Ron Rempel to Marlin Miller, Oct. 30, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Marlin Miller to Ron Rempel, Nov. 15, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

164. Quotation from Marlin Miller, et. al., “Subcommittee Report and Recommendations” to GBS Board of Overseers, Jan. 18, 1984, pp. 3-4, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. On Miller’s later regret, see Ted Koontz interview with author, June 6, 2014.

165. Larry Eby email communication, Aug. 4, 2014.

166. *Ibid.*

167. Soon after the joint meeting, Yoder expressed dismay to Miller that not all M.B.S. board members had kept details of the session confidential.—Yoder to Miller, July 14, 1984, AMBS Evelyn Shellenberger Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-003, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen.

168. Marlin Miller to Joe Hertzler, June 29, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Richard A. Kauffman to Evelyn Shellenberger, Dec. 8, 1986, AMBS Evelyn Shellenberger Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-003.

Conference assembly in Strasbourg, France. It would be an enormous gathering, with thousands of people attending from seventy nations. But from Miller's point of view, too many people on both sides of the Atlantic were aware of Yoder's sexual behaviors.¹⁶⁹ Yoder had acquiesced, but his subsequent comments to others about a lack of fairness associated with his seminary resignation reflected his irritation with Miller, and Yoder's wrangling over the next several years for access to seminary resources echoed this dissatisfaction.¹⁷⁰ Gradually, however, seminary ties loosened. In the coming years, Yoder, whose profile as theologian and ethicist would grow with his base at the University of Notre Dame, would not be welcome at any A.M.B.S. event.

A CHURCH MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING?

After Yoder's departure, Miller, when asked why he had left, hewed to the line about the separation having been a way to resolve longstanding issues. From interested parties both within and beyond the Mennonite Church, he fielded queries that often reflected sympathy for Yoder. "Where is the grace in all this?" asked one friend. Usually circumspect, Miller replied with details that few others would learn: his communications regarding sexual violations by Yoder had involved approximately thirty individuals "in Africa, Canada, Europe, and the United States, and . . . comparable situations in South America." He and his colleagues had exercised exceeding patience with Yoder, and the toll on his own health and family life had been significant. Given these challenges, Miller mused that it had been necessary for Yoder to sever his ties with the seminary; that he had left was a sign of grace.¹⁷¹

Any relief Miller may have felt was short-lived. Mennonite administrators and academics hoping to work with Yoder—but puzzling over whether they ought to—brought a tide of new problems into the president's office. From Kansas, a Mennonite pastor reported that Yoder's plans to teach a class at the Great Plains Seminary Extension was thrown into question because of rumors about his past, and the word from Yoder himself was that "the Matthew 18 process" at the Elkhart

169. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, April 10, 1983 AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. By late spring 1984, the Mennonite Central Committee's Peace Section was also reassessing its relationship with Yoder. See "Review: John Howard Yoder Portfolio," May 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

170. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, June 4, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; John Howard Yoder to Joseph Hertzler, July 27, 1987, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to Joseph Hertzler, July 28, 1987, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

171. Quotation from Marlin Miller in letter to correspondent, March 18, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

seminary had broken down.¹⁷² By the mid-1980s, a generation of pastoral leaders had imbibed lessons on church discipline—in the biblical phrase, “binding and loosing”—from Yoder through his widely-disseminated books and lectures.¹⁷³ With Yoder now reportedly saying that Christian principles of accountability had been devalued at the seminary, Miller regarded Yoder’s word as disingenuous. Miller felt bound, by his written severance agreements with Yoder, to say little in response, but he showed a fellow A.M.B.S. administrator where he kept his Yoder-related files under lock and key, “in case,” he said, “my plane ever goes down.”¹⁷⁴

From Herald Press, the Mennonite publishing house headquartered in western Pennsylvania, which had an interest in continuing to publish Yoder’s work, came a pointed query: “Has John been involved in adultery?”¹⁷⁵ Posed by the press’s editor for theological books, this question fell into the category that Miller had promised Yoder he would address only after consulting with his board chair and Yoder himself. Miller did confer with them and then urged Herald Press to interrogate Yoder directly, suggesting opaquely that the editors ask Yoder “where he now stands on matters the seminary was concerned about and which contributed to his resignation.”¹⁷⁶ The issue would not go away. For years, Herald Press would face pressure from readers who questioned whether the Mennonite standard-bearer in publishing should continue to publish Yoder, as well as those who critiqued the press for grappling with that question.¹⁷⁷

172. Lois Barrett letter to Marlin Miller, May 28, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

173. Lapp interview, June 24, 2014.

174. Quotation from Richard Kauffman interview with author; see also Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, March 13, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. Miller had used the phrase “in case my plane goes down” in referring to his Yoder-related files as early as 1979. See Miller to Yoder, Dec. 26, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. Miller’s reticence to communicate details about Yoder’s departure from AMBS was encouraged by legal counsel; see Greg Hartzler to Marlin Miller, March 20, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

175. Loren Johns to Marlin Miller, Sept. 12, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

176. Marlin Miller to Loren Johns, Nov. 18, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

177. Cf. Loren Johns to Charlie Cooper, Jan. 27, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Millard Lind to Marlin Miller, Jan. 12, 1987, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. For varied perspectives on the press’s 2013 decision regarding books authored by Yoder, see “MennoMedia to Include Publishers Statement in John Howard Yoder Books,” Dec. 9, 2013, <http://www.menno-media.org/?Page=7904>, and letter to editor by Walter Klaassen, Ruth Klaassen, Harry Loewen, and Vern Ratzlaff, *Canadian Mennonite*, March 3, 2014, 11-13.

Inquiries to the seminary from Herald Press coincided with rising concerns within Yoder's own congregation, the Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart. Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing for more than a decade, a succession of pastors there—first gingerly, and then more boldly—approached Yoder, responding to information circulating about his extramarital sexual activity. Prior to Yoder's departure from Goshen Biblical Seminary, Prairie Street pastor Phil Bedsworth and a ministerial colleague had spoken with Yoder in an effort to apply Matthew 18. They were concerned about the state of Yoder's marriage, but they did not pursue the matter beyond a few conversations.¹⁷⁸

In 1986, a newly-arrived pastor at Prairie Street, Charlie Cooper, hosted a series of breakfast meetings with the nine other ordained ministers in the congregation in an effort to build collegial relationships with Yoder and other leaders.¹⁷⁹ (Yoder had been ordained to the ministry in 1973 while serving as president of Goshen Biblical Seminary.) Cooper later remembered: "These men had for the most part known Yoder for years, and several had heard . . . of 'concerns.'"¹⁸⁰ A number were retired pastors; others held posts in Mennonite agencies. At these meetings, Yoder and Cooper discussed the meaning of ordination. It was a topic of significance for Cooper because believers church theology held that the locus for disciplining members, including ordained leaders, was the congregation.¹⁸¹ Had Mennonites ascribed to a more hierarchical ecclesiology, Prairie Street Mennonite Church would have been less likely to investigate rumors of Yoder's sexual misconduct. But throughout 1986, Cooper and the congregational Board of Elders—a leadership group responsible for spiritual well-being within the congregation—felt obliged to respond to inquiries from Herald Press and to determine whether or not Yoder could remain a church member in good standing.¹⁸²

The elders were frustrated in their efforts to obtain information from Yoder directly. Yoder told Cooper that if they were ready "to go into matters in greater depth, read papers, deal with appropriate definitions

178. James Lapp, handwritten notes, March 27, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; Keith Harder interview with author, July 12, 2014.

179. Simon Gingerich interview with author, June 7, 2014; "Litany for the Service of Ordination of John Howard Yoder," May 6, 1973, AMBS Marlin-Miller John Howard Yoder Files.

180. Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

181. Prairie Street representatives consulted with leaders of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference about the congregation's responsibility for accountability regarding ministers; see Indiana-Michigan Church Life Commission Minutes, April 3, 1986, p. 3, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

182. Loren Johns to Charlie Cooper, Jan. 27, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

and research results," he would be more willing to engage with them.¹⁸³ That was a conversation stopper. Decades later, Cooper recalled: "It was difficult to see [Yoder's] life-long friends in elders meeting trying to be helpful and nurturing while pushing him toward honesty, and see them being essentially humiliated as he ran them around in intellectual, ethical, theological circles."¹⁸⁴ When confronted with questions about moral lapses, Yoder neither confirmed nor denied. The Prairie Street elders then turned to Miller for context and clues, but the seminary president would not divulge specific reasons for Yoder's separation from A.M.B.S.¹⁸⁵

After nearly a year, the Prairie Street elders concluded that, despite continuing concerns about Yoder, they lacked clear evidence of wrongdoing. Hearing this, Herald Press, whose earlier inquiries had suggested that his actions threatened Mennonite propriety, saw no reason to discipline him over unsubstantiated allegations. If the Prairie Street congregation could find no justification for revoking his church membership, then "we cannot but hold him to be completely clear of accusation—a Herald Press author in good standing."¹⁸⁶ At the Elkhart seminary, President Miller was dismayed that the press planned to proceed with publishing Yoder's work when judgments from Yoder's congregational leaders were ambiguous.¹⁸⁷ For their part, the press's editors never considered launching their own inquiry into Yoder's past, but they were perplexed by Miller's reluctance to speak candidly about Yoder's moral character.¹⁸⁸

Church accountability, it seemed, was a slippery business. In the next decade, as credible accounts of Yoder's sexual abuse emerged and questions arose again about lines of accountability, leaders at A.M.B.S., Herald Press, and Prairie Street Mennonite Church all rethought assumptions about whether a congregation with no access to verifiable information could effectively discipline Mennonites' best-known theologian. Who had failed the church? Who had disappointed women fearful of Yoder's movements in the Elkhart and South Bend

183. Quotation from Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, pp. 2-3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

184. Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

185. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

186. Quotation from Loren Johns to Charlie Cooper, Dec. 18, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Loren Johns interview with author, June 6, 2014.

187. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

188. Loren Johns interview with author.

communities and beyond? These questions were rhetorical, but Cooper, who left Prairie Street in 1989 for another pastorate, reflected that “the only person not spinning their wheels or convening meetings nor draining their energy nor playing private detective . . . was John Howard Yoder. He seemed very content to wait out the process.”¹⁸⁹ It would be nearly five years before Mennonite ecclesiastical bodies would maneuver toward him again.

"NO LONGER A PRIVATE MATTER"

In 1989, Yoder sustained injuries in a car accident that resulted in physical limitations for the rest of his life. Lingering foot pain and a reliance on crutches to walk presented mobility challenges for the Notre Dame professor, now over 60 years old; but his productivity remained undiminished. Yoder wrote in five languages, and translators made his works even more accessible. At A.M.B.S. and other institutions around the world, his books on theology and ethics were part of course curricula. But in Elkhart, students speculated about why he no longer taught at the seminary, and some challenged faculty members and administrators to remove Yoder’s writings from required reading lists. A few professors had stopped referencing Yoder in the classroom, while others regarded his scholarship as central to their own teaching and research.¹⁹⁰

In 1990, Ruth and Harold Yoder, a married couple who had recently completed studies at A.M.B.S., began serving as co-pastors at Prairie Street Mennonite Church. Occasionally receiving queries from Mennonite agencies about John Howard Yoder’s sexual misconduct, the new pastors were unsure how to respond, but a member of Prairie Street’s Board of Elders passed along a file documenting the 1986 confrontations with him. Now, five years later, Mennonite conferences were beginning to implement policies addressing sexual abuse. The Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, which held Yoder’s ministerial credential, was on the verge of adopting guidelines for responding to sexual abuse allegations against ordained leaders.¹⁹¹ Aware of these

189. Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

190. Mary H. Schertz to Marlin Miller, Feb. 19, 1990, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Memo to Marlin Miller, Feb. 19, 1990, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; AMBS Joint Boards Executive Minutes, March 1, 1990, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Swartley interview with author.

191. John Esau of the General Conference Mennonite Church had already drafted “Guidelines for Discipline in Ministerial Credentialing.” See eighth revision, Jan. 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; “Draft—Guidelines for Dealing with Alleged Sexual Harassment and/or Abuse,” Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, May

developments, the Prairie Street pastors and elders opened a new investigation. As with earlier efforts, the Matthew 18 frame for resolving conflict was still in play, but it was now overlaid with concerns about potential for abuse in settings where individuals held unequal power.

Rooted in the Prairie Street congregation, this initiative also included Mennonite leaders whose concerns about Yoder's conduct dated back many years. During 1991-1992, the newly-constituted Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force included representatives of the congregation along with five members from the broader denomination, including James Lapp, general secretary of the Mennonite Church.¹⁹² Lapp had been aware of allegations about Yoder's misconduct and had earlier assumed that adjudication should fall to Goshen Biblical Seminary and to the Prairie Street congregation. But now, perspectives about misuses of religious authority influenced Lapp and other leaders.

Lapp later recalled,

There was a gap in John's theology and understanding, of not respecting power dynamics. The whole culture was changing about how we viewed abuse of women. It was no longer a private matter; we came to see the inadequacy of that. By the 1990s there was more willingness to take responsibility, and I was prodded along by these voices of women.¹⁹³

Other voices were emerging, as well. John K. Stoner, for example, a pacifist writer and administrator for Mennonite Central Committee, urged Lapp to reject Yoder's interpretations of Matthew 18. Stoner knew individuals familiar with Yoder's sexual aggressions, and argued that confronting him required a new model:

The first step must be a careful, thorough and sensitive documentation of the stories of all of the women who have a complaint. . . . Totally contrary to what John Howard has maintained, the victims do not have to confront and accuse him face

18, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files, Elkhart, Ind.; Harold Yoder interview with author, June 7, 2014; Sherm Kauffman interview with author, June 9, 2014.

192. "Charge to JHY Task Force," 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files. Harold Yoder convened the Task Force, which included Prairie Street's Ruth Yoder and Mary Mishler, as well as Atlee Beechy, Phyllis Stutzman, Dale Schumm, Willis Breckbill, and James Lapp.

193. Quotations from Lapp interview with author. See also Lapp to Victor Stoltzfus, April 30, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Lapp, handwritten notes from meeting with Harold Yoder, May 29, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files. Some male Mennonite leaders reported transformational experiences in the early to mid-1990s as a result of participating in conferences focused on stopping male violence against women. See, for example, Ted Koontz, "Born Again," in *Godward*, ed. Ted Koontz (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1996), 17-24.

to face. In the nature of the case, very few or none of them have the power to do that, and it is beside the point (indeed, perverse) to blame them.¹⁹⁴

Stoner's critique reflected the work of Christian theorist Marie Fortune, who in *Sexual Violence* and other writings posited that the Matthew passage "assumes a level playing field with all parties equal. This cannot be true when one party is a pastor."¹⁹⁵ As an alternative approach, Stoner's perspective guided the new JHY Task Force, whose members began contacting women to document past offenses.

The task force's initiatives laid the groundwork for an unprecedented confrontation with Yoder. Within the year, his history of abuse would become public knowledge. In the fall of 1991, Mennonite activism aimed at bringing Yoder's sexual misconduct to light coincided with the U.S. Senate confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas. Millions of Americans watched televised accounts of the nominee denying accusations of sexual harassment, and publicity surrounding the hearings stimulated nationwide discussions about sexual behavior in the workplace as well as power inequities.¹⁹⁶ Although Thomas was eventually appointed to the Supreme Court, new attention to claims of sexual harassment gave further weight to the JHY Task Force, which was determined to learn the extent of Yoder's sexual abuse toward women and apply protocols for church-based discipline.

MINISTERIAL CREDENTIAL SUSPENDED

In 1991, Martha Smith Good was serving as campus pastor at Goshen College. A decade and a half earlier, as a student at G.B.S., she had thwarted Yoder's approaches over a period of several years.¹⁹⁷ Also in 1991, Carolyn Holderread Heggen, a Mennonite mental health professional, was living in New Mexico. Heggen had met Yoder a decade earlier when he had traveled to Albuquerque for a series of speaking engagements; during that trip, and later, through correspondence, he made unwelcome sexual advances to her.¹⁹⁸ Both women had rebuffed Yoder directly and, in due time, had spoken with

194. John K. Stoner to James Lapp, received April 4, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

195. Quotation from Bromley and Cress, "Narratives of Sexual Danger," 148. See also Marie Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, [1983] 2005).

196. "The Clarence Thomas Confirmation Hearings: The Awakening of America to the Issue of Sexual Harassment," in Paul I. Weizer, *Sexual Harassment: Cases, Case Studies, & Commentary* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 147.

197. Good interview with author.

198. Heggen interview with author.

his employer, Marlin Miller, about their experiences.¹⁹⁹ Heggen would pursue a career in mental health, speaking and writing on sexual abuse. By the 1990s, she was in regular contact with Mennonite agencies, raising awareness about violence against women and encouraging networking among survivors of sexual abuse.²⁰⁰

Heggen, frustrated by Miller's apparent deference to Yoder, despite reports of ongoing harassment of women, became acquainted with Good in the fall of 1991. The two women's experience of finding each other was significant for their own sense of well-being, and they decided to invite other women to join them, since the Elkhart seminary had not reached out to extend care to Yoder's victims. They took a letter they had written, inviting other women to contact them for mutual support, to Miller, and asked him to mail it to anyone who had contacted him about unwanted sexual approaches by Yoder.²⁰¹ They left Miller little choice. When he initially refused, Heggen told him that she had already shared a copy of the letter with J. Lorne Peachey, editor of the Mennonite magazine *The Gospel Herald*. Peachey had earlier told Heggen that if he could use his position to support her work in creating awareness about sexual abuse in Mennonite contexts, he would do so, and he was willing, if necessary, to publish the letter.²⁰²

After consulting with the seminary's attorney, Miller reluctantly gave the two women the help they sought. Miller had a long record of keeping secrets about Yoder's actions, but times had changed. Secrecy in the matter of ecclesiastical handling of authority and sexual abuse could no longer be maintained, and he now regarded Yoder's history as far more troubling than an injudicious "experiment" in Christian ethics. Miller forwarded Good and Heggen's letter to individuals whose names he had filed away. In a cover note, Miller wrote: "Please give their request your serious consideration. If you choose to respond, you may get in touch with one of them directly."²⁰³ Ironically, as the women's circle

199. During the 1983-1984 academic year, Yoder wrote to Heggen, raising the possibility that he might sue for libel.—Heggen, email to author, June 27, 2014; Charlene Epp to Harold and Ruth Yoder, Sept. 4, 1991, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

200. Heggen interview with author; Carolyn Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993).

201. Ruth Krall, who was acquainted with both Good and Heggen, had suggested that they meet.—Martha Smith Good and Carolyn Holderread Heggen to Marlin Miller and Marcus Smucker, "Unfinished Business re: John Howard Yoder," Oct. 23, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

202. Heggen interview with author. See also Marlin Miller letter to J. Lorne Peachey, Nov. 7, 1990, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

203. Quotation from Marlin Miller, "Draft: Confidential," c. Dec. 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Martha Smith Good and Carolyn Holderread Heggen letter addressed "Dear Sister," 1991, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in

was widening, Miller's supporting role would be hidden from view. Even though secrecy in the matter of Yoder's legacies of abuse was ending, transparency in Mennonite institutions remained elusive; Miller told members of his administrative cabinet that, if queried about Yoder's past employment at the seminary, they should speak in "neutral terms of 'sexual conduct' rather than 'sexual harassment.'" Miller was concerned that loose talk at the seminary might result in a libel suit.²⁰⁴

The women's network developed swiftly. In February 1992, Good hosted a weekend gathering of eight women at her Elkhart home. Some had not known each other before. They shared with each other the physical and emotional impact that Yoder's actions in the 1970s and 1980s had had on them, as well as longer-term effects on their families, marriages, careers, and friendships. Concerned that Yoder's status afforded him opportunities for continued harassment and abuse, the group was determined to act, despite concerns about "a potentially explosive response when John's behaviour is confronted and made public."²⁰⁵

The following morning, by prior arrangement, the women arrived at the home of the pastors of the Prairie Street church to meet with the JHY Task Force and give firsthand accounts of their experiences. They presented a four-page composite statement of Yoder's aggressions toward them, noting that "we know from talking with other women that our experiences do not represent the full scope of John's inappropriate sexual behavior."²⁰⁶ They requested suspension of Yoder's ministerial credential while Mennonite authorities investigated, and asked that church leaders take responsibility for stopping his misconduct, adding: "We do not feel that invoking Matthew 18 as a model for process is appropriate in this case. . . . A number of us are frightened by John and at this point do not want an ongoing relationship with him."²⁰⁷ Each woman signed her name but requested that individual identities not be released.²⁰⁸ After speaking, the women asked: "Do you believe us?" Task

the author's possession; Martha Smith Good to Marlin Miller, Dec. 4, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to Martha Smith Good, Dec. 11, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

204. Quotation from Marlin Miller to Gayle Gerber Koontz and Richard Kauffman, March 3, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

205. Martha Smith Good to undisclosed recipients, Feb. 17, 1992, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

206. "Confidential Statement," Feb. 21-22, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Martha Smith Good to Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Feb. 6, 1992, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

207. "Confidential Statement," quotation from p. 4.

208. *Ibid.*, p. 4; Heggen, "Misconceptions and Victim Blaming," 31.

force members responded that they did, concluding unanimously that the women's reports were credible.²⁰⁹

Three weeks later, the task force charged Yoder with thirteen sexual misconduct offenses, noting:

These charges indicate a long pattern of inappropriate sexual behavior between you and a number of women. The settings for this conduct were in many places: conferences, classrooms, retreats, homes, apartments, offices, parking lots. We believe the stories we have heard, and recognize that they represent deep pain for the women. . . . The stories represent . . . a violation of the trust placed in you as a church leader.²¹⁰

From a Mennonite theologian and friend came an additional plea that Yoder repent for violating women's trust in the context of his churchly authority. "You were next to God to some of them, John," wrote an A.M.B.S. professor, Ted Koontz:

You abused that power, you betrayed them, you made their faith harder, their lives more burdened. . . . You were terribly powerful in those relationships, and just "asking" before acting does not make the relationship mutual or desired. You are still incredibly powerful in relationship to many of them—it is pure fear of you which has caused many of them to remain silent for so long.²¹¹

The task force's charges of sexual misconduct buttressed a substantive Mennonite accountability process that would last until 1996. More immediately, however, Yoder faced revelations at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, where he had agreed to give the keynote address at a 1992 conference on nonviolence and violence in American history. Two months before the conference, protests over Yoder's impending appearance prompted a barrage of communications between college administrators and others, including some women who reported past sexual violations by Yoder.²¹² The Bethel College president, John Zehr, rescinded the conference invitation, and the campus's student

209. The women regarded the task force members' warm reception as affirming and sensitive.—Tina Mast Burnett to James Lapp, Feb. 28, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; Harold Yoder interview with author; Heggen interview with author; "Summary of 2-22-92 Meeting," Feb. 25, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

210. JHY Task Force memorandum to John Howard Yoder, "Charges of Sexual Misconduct," March 14, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

211. Ted Koontz to John Howard Yoder, Feb. 24, 1992, provided by Ted Koontz, in the author's possession.

212. Conference program, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; "The Decision to Disinvite John Howard Yoder to Speak: An Interview with James C. Juhnke," *The Mennonite*, June 2014, 44; James Juhnke, email to author, June 9, 2014.

newspaper, *The Bethel Collegian*, reported the story. Within days *The Mennonite Weekly Review* ran a news feature that led to a wave of journalistic accounts in the Mennonite press, revealing charges of sexual harassment and abuse.²¹³ Controversy swirled over whether the accusations against Yoder were credible. Related press coverage in the secular press reached a zenith in July 1992, when *The Elkhart Truth* published a five-article series, based on religion writer Tom Price's "interviews over a three-month period with church leaders, theologians, and three of the eight women who brought the allegations to a church panel."²¹⁴ Price reported that the scope of Yoder's sexual abuse may have involved thirty women in addition to the eight who had come forward.

At the Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, these developments exacerbated tensions between the pastors and some congregational members. John Howard and Anne Yoder stopped attending services at Prairie Street, and the Board of Elders, concerned about the couple's spiritual well-being, assigned several retired persons to offer pastoral care to them. Task force members, who had earlier assured confidentiality in updates to the congregation, faced criticism from some individuals who wrongly assumed that they had leaked accusations to the press.²¹⁵ The task force had been meeting with Yoder for several months but feared that the publicity would trigger his withdrawal from ongoing talks.²¹⁶

Yoder never denied the thirteen charges of sexual misconduct. He responded to the task force that he regarded his usefulness to Mennonite

213. Cott, "Yoder Disinvited to Conference," *Bethel Collegian*, March 5, 1992, 1; Schrag, "Bethel Withdraws Invitation for Theologian to Speak," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 12, 1992, 3.

214. "Theologian's Future Faces a 'Litmus Test'," *The Elkhart Truth*, July 12, 1992, B-1; B-3. Price used pseudonyms for women who, more recently, have identified themselves as having been among the eight women; Good was "Clara" in the series; Heggen was "Tina." The articles are available online on Ted Grimsrud's website, <http://peace theology.net/john-h-yoder/john-howard-yoder%E2%80%99s-sexual-misconduct%E2%80%94part-five-2/>. In citing Price's article, however, Grimsrud's site contains an unfortunate transcription error. The site says Price reported 80 women may have been abused in addition to the eight who came forward. The number that Price actually cited in his reporting was 30, not 80. Some of the women who told their stories to the press received rebukes, including in letters to the editor appearing in Mennonite periodicals; c.f. Winifred Waltner, letter to editor, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 19, 1992, p. 4, and Debra H. Bender, letter to editor, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, April 2, 1992. On Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force concerns about victim-blaming, see Harold Yoder to JHY Accountability and Support Group, Oct. 6, 1992, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

215. "Statement from the Elders and Pastors to Be Read on Sunday Morning," March 15, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

216. Harold Yoder interview with author; see also "Price Told the John Howard Yoder Story," *The Mennonite*, Oct. 1, 2013, http://www.themennonite.org/issues/16-10/articles/news_analysis_Price_told_the_John_Howard_Yoder_story.

institutions to be nearing an end, and that he would not be greatly concerned if his ties with the denomination diminished. Task force members countered that in his writings, he had championed accountability to the church.²¹⁷ They challenged Yoder's "pattern of rationalization," asking why he had persisted in activities "which held the strong possibility of . . . discrediting your career as a moral theologian."²¹⁸ He replied that he had "helped" some women, but expressed regret that he had not adequately understood from some women their level of consent.²¹⁹ His stance echoed his arguments to Marlin Miller a decade earlier: as an intellectual engaged with ethical questions, Yoder emphasized, he required freedom to think critically and to arrive at unpopular conclusions, and he could not cave in to expectations that his ideas conform to those of Mennonites seeking to discipline him.²²⁰

In June 1992, the task force recommended to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference that Yoder's ministerial credential be suspended. Conference officials did so immediately, issuing a statement that "Yoder has violated sexual boundaries" and that the conference was calling on him to enter therapy and make restitution.²²¹ Those involved in this decision, however, were uncertain how he would respond.

Yoder agreed to participate after three theologians with collegial ties to him—Glen Stassen of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, James McClendon of Fuller Theological Seminary, and Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University—urged him, in a conference call, to commit to the accountability process for the sake of his broader influence and Christian ministry.²²² Having already asserted that he had initiated few "familial" relationships with women since leaving A.M.B.S., Yoder now told the task force that he had communicated with all women with whom he had had "familial" contacts in the past five years to tell them he was

217. "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John Howard Yoder," June 3, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

218. JHY Task Force to John Howard Yoder, "Summary and Recommendations for Resolution," May 8, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

219. Yoder explained his views that, if both persons involved agreed to stop their physical activities short of intercourse, the relationship was not sexualized.— Ibid.; James Lapp, notes, March 14 and March 26, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

220. "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John Howard Yoder," June 3, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

221. Addendum to CLC Minutes, May 18, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference press release, June 27, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

222. Harold Yoder to JHY Task Force, June 16, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; see also Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 244-245.

discontinuing those relationships.²²³ He wrote a statement to be distributed through the task force to the eight women who had accused him of sexual misconduct, in which he referred to “the intensity of my regret for the pain I caused you.”²²⁴ Over the next four years, Yoder would contemplate reconciliation with persons harmed, give a modest sum toward financial restitution, undergo therapy, and in all these matters engage closely with a disciplinary group established by the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference’s Church Life Commission.²²⁵

INDIANA-MICHIGAN MENNONITE CONFERENCE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Following the suspension of Yoder’s ministerial credential, the JHY Task Force disbanded, turning matters over to the Church Life Commission—a standing committee of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—and to the newly-formed Accountability and Support Group, which the commission appointed in October 1992 to work with Yoder on disciplinary steps. In establishing the Accountability and Support Group, the regional conference was following recently-adopted policies for addressing sexual abuse. Among the protocols, an intervention team was to meet regularly with the person facing charges.²²⁶ Two task force members ensured continuity by joining the Accountability and Support Group: Atlee Beechy, professor of psychology at Goshen College, and Mary Mishler, a Prairie Street elder. Also joining were two Mennonite mental health professionals, Betty Hochstetler and John G. Kaufman.

The Accountability and Support Group began its work with Yoder in November 1992, focusing on setting ground rules for confidentiality, planning for reconciliation with victims and making restitution, and

223. “Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John Howard Yoder,” June 26, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

224. John Howard Yoder, “Memorandum to Persons I Have Offended,” July 7, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; women who received Yoder’s statement responded that it “reflected considerable self-justification by explaining the situation as misunderstanding or misinterpreting his motives and approaches rather than clearly reflecting a confessional and repentance position.” See “A Summary of the Responses from Seven Women,” Aug. 1992, Accountability and Support Group, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

225. John Howard Yoder to Prairie Street Elders and to the Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission, July 7, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

226. “Draft—Guidelines for Dealing with Alleged Sexual Harassment and/or Abuse,” Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, May 18, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files. These newly-adopted guidelines were similar to those in use by the United Church of Christ (UCC) denomination.

arranging for psychological evaluation and therapy.²²⁷ Accountability and Support Group members expected to report the outcomes of Yoder's disciplinary process to the regional conference's Church Life Commission, which had the authority to reinstate or withdraw Yoder's ministerial credential. Although the Accountability and Support Group members envisioned that their task would be challenging, no one anticipated meeting more than thirty times with Yoder over four years in a labyrinth-like process burdened by disputes. Within a year, the regional conference's Church Life Commission, which had appointed the group, considered restructuring it because of philosophical and managerial questions about whether "accountability" and "support" functions could—or should—be combined in the same committee. The group frequently met in homes (the Yoders' and group members') and, over time, the commission perceived that the group, while dedicated in fulfilling its mandate, tilted in the direction of offering support to the Yoders, likely compromising their "accountability" directives. These tensions lingered through the mid-1990s.²²⁸

On matters of sexual behavior, as far as the Accountability and Support Group could ascertain, Yoder yielded to expectations that he not approach women inappropriately. But in sparring with those attempting to discipline him, he appropriated the language of victimhood for himself.²²⁹ Responding to a Mennonite scholar informing him that his membership on the board of editors of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* was suspended, pending resolution of the Indiana-Michigan disciplinary process, Yoder retorted that, in this set of events, "you are as much a victim as I."²³⁰

Although in mid-1992 Indiana-Michigan conference officials intended to release a written statement by Yoder that he was working toward reconciliation, his drafts, at best, minimized his actions and suggested

227. Minutes, Accountability and Support Group for John Howard Yoder, Nov. 16, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

228. Family linkages in these two Mennonite committees posed additional complications. Atlee Beechy, A.S.G. chair, was the father-in-law of Gordon Dyck, who led the C.L.C. from 1993 until the accountability process ended in 1996. Dyck's leadership derived in part because the C.L.C.'s chair, Gerald Good—husband of Martha Smith Good—recused himself in Yoder-related matters. The C.L.C. and the A.S.G. differed significantly about how to engage Yoder most effectively.—ASG minutes, June 22, 1993; Addendum to CLC Minutes, Feb. 10, 1994 and April 20, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Nancy Kauffman interview with author, June 5, 2014; Dyck interview with author, June 5, 2014.

229. "ASG Progress Report," May 17, 1994, p. 4, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

230. John Howard Yoder to Walter Sawatsky, Oct. 1, 1992, Mennonite Historical Society Files in the author's possession.

that he was sorry for having misunderstood women's consent. At worst, Yoder's writings shed doubt on his sincerity.²³¹ Psychological research on the confessions of perpetrators indicates that individuals tend to acknowledge only what they can justify to themselves, and Yoder's statements to Indiana-Michigan conference interrogators apparently followed this pattern.²³² As a result, conference officials decided not to release Yoder's statements nor issue any public information about the disciplinary process. Later, when asked if he had ever apologized for his actions, Yoder asserted: "I was prevented from [doing so] in August 1992."²³³ His claim fanned speculation that he had been willing to make a public statement of repentance but had been barred from doing so by conference officials.²³⁴

Critiques akin to those that Marlin Miller at the seminary had long regarded as the price of confidentiality now came directed to the Indiana-Michigan conference from Christian scholars who yearned for Yoder's reputation to be restored. From Ontario, a Mennonite professor of biblical studies wondered if the commission was taking too much time working for healing between Yoder and his victims: "[T]he longer such a process is stalled," he argued, "the easier it is for the abused and the abuser to exchange roles."²³⁵ Two years later, an appeal from theologians Glen Stassen, Stanley Hauerwas, and Mark Nation arrived on the desks of Indiana-Michigan conference officials, urging swift closure in the disciplinary process and restoration of Yoder to his broader work in the church.²³⁶ "It is our understanding that despite the fact that he considers his views on sexuality to be prophetic," wrote Hauerwas and Nation in a second letter to the Indiana-Michigan conference, "he has used considerable self-restraint and has shown remarkable respect for his

231. John Howard Yoder, "Memorandum to the Prairie Street Elders and Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission," July 7, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; John Howard Yoder, "Memorandum to the Prairie Street Elders and to the Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission, Aug. 20, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

232. See Eyal Peer, Alessandro Acquisti, and Shaul Shalvi, "'I Cheated, but Only a Little': Partial Confessions of Unethical Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106 (2014), 202; 214.

233. John Howard Yoder to George R. Brunk III, Jan. 14, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen.

234. For example, see Christa Eshleman, "Seminary Features Yoder: Theologian's Return Raises Questions," *Weather Vane*, v. 42, no. 10, Jan. 23, 1997.

235. William Klassen to Gerald Good, CLC chair, Dec. 15, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

236. Nation, Stassen, and Hauerwas to Atlee Beechy, June 14, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

Church by not promoting his views publicly anytime during his long teaching career."²³⁷

But the two regional committees managing Yoder's disciplinary process saw things differently. While they agreed that "the tight lipped process complicates the whole thing," they expected that pending issues, including communications between Yoder and aggrieved women, developing plans for financial restitution, and assessing Yoder's mental health needs, would take time to resolve.²³⁸ Although they faced pressure from Yoder's colleagues—Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists, and others—to restore Yoder to ministry, the commission knew that Yoder himself did not regard his credential as necessary for his ongoing work as a theologian and ethicist at the University of Notre Dame.

In writing and teaching, Yoder had long de-emphasized the significance of his ministerial status.²³⁹ He told Church Life Commission members that his ordination, conducted in 1973 at his parents' Mennonite church in Ohio, "was a fiction in the past and has no meaning for the foreseeable future."²⁴⁰ In conversations with the commission and the Accountability and Support Group, Yoder expressed doubts about his acceptance among Mennonites.²⁴¹ Although his name remained on the membership roster at Prairie Street Mennonite Church, his interests were not narrowly denominational, a stance that complicated matters for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials tasked with disciplining him. They were sincere in their efforts to address Yoder's sexual misconduct, but they were negotiating with a high-profile figure whose long-term cooperation was never assured and whose adversarial bent was considerable. Throughout the four-year process, there would be no quick or easy resolution to any aspect of Yoder's status as a Mennonite churchman, nor would "reconciliation" with many of the women he had targeted prove to be an attainable goal.

As part of the disciplinary process, the Accountability and Support Group took seriously its liaison role between Yoder and any women who wished to confront him. Members of the group kept in regular contact

237. Quotation from Hauerwas and Nation to Yoder Church Discipline Committee, July 7, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Gordon Dyck to Hauerwas and Nation, Sept. 29, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

238. Quotation from Aug. 18, 1994 C.L.C. meeting with Prairie Street elders and pastors, in minutes of Elders meeting, Aug. 24, 1994, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files.

239. C.L.C. Consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

240. John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck, Jan. 16, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

241. Final Report of A.S.G. to C.L.C., June 12, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

with the eight women who had given their accounts to the Prairie Street/JHY Task Force in early 1992. Two had opted for face-to-face meetings with Yoder, which the Accountability and Support Group arranged, and seven of the eight eventually revealed their identities to Yoder, so that by mid-1994, he came to know who had charged him with sexual misconduct before representatives of the Mennonite Church.²⁴² Although few of the eight women desired contact with Yoder, one additional woman, “Elena,” the former A.M.B.S. student who had left the seminary following Marlin Miller’s threat of expulsion, requested a meeting with Yoder. In 1993 she and members of the Accountability and Support Group met face-to-face with Yoder and his wife so that she could report the trauma, both initially and in subsequent years, that resulted from Yoder’s abuse.²⁴³

Anne Yoder supported her husband throughout the church disciplinary process, regularly participating in the Accountability and Support Group meetings and occasionally contacting members of the Church Life Commission to advocate for compassion for her husband.²⁴⁴ Her anger at him, which had been visible to Miller and others in the 1970s, had shifted in the 1980s as A.M.B.S. had forced Yoder’s resignation and then banned him from campus events. Over time, she nurtured a protective stance; by the 1990s, she had allied with her husband as he navigated disciplinary measures. In her memoir, published decades later, she referenced “all the turmoil and difficulties” in Elkhart when Yoder’s sexual misconduct had become public, and expressed appreciation for the neighborhood Lutheran church that she and her husband had attended during the Mennonite disciplinary process.²⁴⁵

In 1995, the Yoders requested a transfer of membership from the Prairie Street congregation to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.²⁴⁶

242. “Progress Report of the ASG,” May 17, 1994, p. 3, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

243. Addendum to Church Life Commission Minutes, April 12, 1993, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Betty Hochstetler interview with author, June 5, 2014.

244. Gordon Dyck, handwritten notes, July 26, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Anne Yoder to Gordon Dyck, April 1, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

245. Anne Guth Yoder with Rebecca Yoder Neufeld, *What I Hold Precious*, 176 and 198, n. 8. Friends of the Yoders at Prairie Street Mennonite Church regarded the Lutheran congregation and pastoral leadership as offering a welcoming environment to the couple.—John Bender interview with author, June 6, 2014.

246. John Howard Yoder to Board of Elders, July 3, 1995, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files.

But their friends at Prairie Street hoped that Mennonites near and far could “forgive and forget” so that the Yoders would return to the Prairie Street congregation.²⁴⁷ Reflecting this desire, Prairie Street’s board of elders never acted on the Yoders’ transfer request, but intensified efforts to restore congregational relationships with the couple.²⁴⁸ The Yoders did not press the transfer issue and their membership at Prairie Street remained intact, with the elders formally reaffirming their membership in 1996.²⁴⁹

While Prairie Street’s elders focused on maintaining contact with the Yoders, members of the Accountability and Support Group realized that no such concentrated effort—by any board or committee—was similarly focused on the women’s welfare. Denominational and congregational resources were being channeled into the rehabilitation of John Howard Yoder, but no comparable endeavor addressed the spiritual and emotional needs of women who had been harmed.²⁵⁰ In most cases, their identities, as well as their hopes for the church accountability process, remained unknown. The Church Life Commission pondered how to communicate with them. Indiana-Michigan conference officials turned for help to the Mennonite Central Committee (M.C.C.), the international relief and development agency, which had already developed a “survivors’ list” to connect victims of pastoral abuse in Mennonite contexts. Indiana-Michigan conference officials seized on the idea that since “MCC was also involved in sending JHY around the world,” the agency might host a women’s communications network and administer restitution funds.²⁵¹

The notion of resourcing through M.C.C. intensified after A.M.B.S. president Marlin Miller, meeting with the Church Life Commission, clarified the international scope of Yoder’s sexual misconduct. Miller spoke confidentially of as many as forty women he now knew to have

247. Quotation from Gordon Dyck notes of phone call with Harold Yoder, June 16, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

248. Board of Elders meeting minutes, April 20, 1995, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files; John Bender interview with author.

249. Board of Elders minutes, July 12, 1995, Jan. 23, 1996, and Dec. 6, 1996, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files.

250. Minutes of C.L.C. consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

251. Quotation from John G. Kaufman, minutes of C.L.C. consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Handwritten notes of C.L.C. meeting, summer 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Sherm Kauffman interview with author. One model proposed by Indiana-Michigan conference officials was that M.C.C. might bill offenders for 80 percent of victims’ expenses for psychotherapy.—Charlotte Holsopple Glick to C.L.C., July 23, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

been affected by Yoder's sexual harassment, and told the commission that he still received correspondence from women who had personally experienced it.²⁵² In 1994, two days before Miller's heart attack and tragic death at the age of 55, he wrote to his former student "Elena," expressing regret for Yoder's behavior toward her, telling her that in the aftermath of Yoder's departure, A.M.B.S. had established policies for registering grievances.²⁵³

At the Prairie Street Mennonite Church, elders were also concerned with restitution. In 1994, the Prairie Street Board of Elders set aside an escrow account, to which Yoder contributed \$1,000 and the congregation added an additional \$500.²⁵⁴ Over a series of meetings, the Accountability and Support Group had engaged Yoder on the size of possible restitution and had tested with him the possibility of an extended contribution program based on a percentage of Yoder's income, but Yoder preferred to make a single payment.²⁵⁵ Restitution, the group asserted, could pay for mental health counseling for victims, reimburse expenses for women who had traveled to Elkhart to confront Yoder, and fund conferences on sexual abuse in religious settings.²⁵⁶ But no consensus emerged on who might be tapped as additional contributors or how such a fund might be administered. Indiana-Michigan conference officials approached Mennonite Central Committee and other Mennonite agencies with an offer of the \$1,500 Prairie Street fund as start-up money, but found no takers.²⁵⁷

By the time the accountability process for Yoder ended in 1996, Indiana-Michigan conference officials had not yet found a home for the

252. Addendum to CLC minutes, Dec. 9, 1993, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Summary of meeting of representatives from A.M.B.S., Prairie Street Mennonite Church, and Church Life Commission, Dec. 18, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

253. Marlin Miller letter, Nov. 1, 1994, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. Miller's statement of regret addressed Yoder's actions, but Miller did not address his own confrontation with her in 1979.—"Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author.

254. Minutes of Board of Elders meetings, Nov. 3, 1994 and Feb. 23, 1995, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files; minutes of C.L.C. and A.S.G. joint meeting, Dec. 18, 1994; MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

255. A.S.G. minutes, Oct. 25, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Dyck interview with author.

256. Addendum to C.L.C. minutes, Sept. 15, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

257. Charlotte Holsopple Glick to C.L.C., July 23, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; minutes of C.L.C. consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Sherm Kauffman to Gordon Dyck, July 17, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

monies held in escrow. A year later, Prairie Street congregational representatives closed the matter by sending a contribution of \$900, at Yoder's suggestion, to the Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle.²⁵⁸ No information about this disbursement of restitution funds was given to women known to Indiana-Mennonite conference officials to have experienced sexual abuse by Yoder.²⁵⁹

Throughout 1994 and 1995, Indiana-Michigan conference officials worried about a potential new complication to their work, asking themselves: "If JHY becomes Lutheran, how will this process change?"²⁶⁰ Hoping to retain leverage, they encouraged the initiatives by Prairie Street elders to maintain contact with Yoder.²⁶¹ He kept his Mennonite affiliation, but in 1995 a significant obstacle to the disciplinary process arose when he withdrew consideration of his ministerial credential from the Church Life Commission. In a letter to the commission, Yoder argued that his case was different from that of several Mennonite ministers who had recently undergone discipline for sexual misconduct while serving in pastorates. As an academic, Yoder no longer desired his ministerial credential, and the commission lost a bargaining chip in their negotiations.²⁶² Along with members of the Accountability and Support Group, commission members had been hoping to establish an ongoing monitoring plan with Yoder as a condition to restoring his credential. No clear proposals had yet been formulated because the commission believed that, to date, they had not received adequate assessment of his psychological functioning. But with Yoder's withdrawal of consideration of his ministerial status from discussions, the commission had no

258. Later, this organization was renamed the FaithTrust Institute. The Board of Elders at Prairie Street sent \$900 to the Seattle organization, and transferred \$450 remaining into Prairie Street Mennonite Church's mutual aid fund.—John Howard Yoder to Ray Horst, Feb. 19, 1997, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Records; minutes, Board of Elders meeting, March 4, 1997; Prairie Street Mennonite Church Records; Ray Horst to Sherm Kauffman, May 27, 1997, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

259. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author; "Questions," Heggen, et. al.

260. Quotation from C.L.C. Agenda/Report for Consultation with ASG, Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; see also Minutes of C.L.C. consultation with ASG, Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

261. Board of Elders meeting minutes, April 18, 1996, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Records.

262. Yoder referenced the Mennonite ministers Urie Bender, Paul Landis, and James Dunn; John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck and C.L.C., Jan. 16, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; A.S.G. meeting minutes, Feb. 15, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; addendum to C.L.C. minutes, Feb. 16, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

continuing jurisdiction over him; as a result, there would be no plan to monitor his ongoing behavior.²⁶³

Assessing Yoder's mental health and ensuring appropriate psychological treatment proved fractious, as well. Early in the church's disciplinary process, several Mennonite mental health professionals had recommended that he enter an out-of-state treatment center for sexual addiction, noting that compulsive behavior often requires stronger interventions than individual willpower.²⁶⁴ Citing distance and expense, Indiana-Michigan conference officials discounted the idea but hoped that locally-provided mental health evaluations and professional counseling would move him toward repentance and apology. Over time, as Yoder remained steadfast in his position that his error had lain in misunderstanding women's consent, Accountability and Support Group members expressed regret that the conference had not pursued residential, group-therapy treatment options.²⁶⁵

Initially, the group and Yoder agreed that he would undergo assessment and counseling from a psychologist named Sheridan McCabe, affiliated with the University of Notre Dame; the Accountability and Support Group believed that Yoder's therapy should focus on "misuse of power" in connection with sexual boundaries.²⁶⁶ A year later, Indiana-Michigan officials were uncertain whether Yoder was continuing to receive counseling, and members of the Church Life Commission questioned whether the psychologist's assessment had been adequate, proposing that a second opinion was in order.²⁶⁷ For several months, Yoder, supported by the Accountability and Support Group,

263. Gordon Dyck to Sherm Kauffman, Atlee Beechy, and John Howard Yoder, March 20, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; C.L.C. meeting minutes, Jan. 19, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

264. Carolyn Holderread Heggen to the A.S.G., April 16, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Ethel Yake Metzler, email to author, Aug. 3, 2014. On therapies recommended for habitual sexual abusers, see Shupe, *Rogue Clerics*, 147.

265. Final Report of the A.S.G. to the C.L.G., June 12, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

266. Minutes of A.S.G. meetings, Jan. 26, 1993, May 11, 1993, and May 25, 1993, and Jan. 4, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

267. Regarding the report of psychologist Sheridan McCabe, see addendum to minutes of C.L.C. meeting, May 16, 1994, and Addendum to minutes of C.L.C. meeting, Nov. 21, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019. McCabe's report on Yoder, which was forwarded to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials, remains restricted material in the Mennonite Church USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

maintained that no further psychological testing was necessary.²⁶⁸ Indiana-Michigan conference officials consulted with a Chicago-area expert on sexual misconduct in church settings to help them strategize for moving forward. The consultant, a prominent Episcopalian priest, pushed the Mennonites to arrange for an independent analysis of Yoder's psychological state; she cautioned them that Yoder "could probably manipulate a polygraph."²⁶⁹

Given Yoder's bent for argumentation, a central question was whether the Accountability and Support Group or anyone involved in the Mennonites' disciplinary process could adequately challenge him.²⁷⁰ The Accountability and Support Group, which met with him regularly, had no direct knowledge of Yoder's earlier semantic gamesmanship with Miller at A.M.B.S. or with Cooper at Prairie Street; nonetheless, Yoder's verbal skills were legendary. In late 1994 Church Life Commission members did arrange for a "second opinion," convincing Yoder to make four trips to Chicago for a series of assessments by psychiatrist John F. Gottlieb.²⁷¹ Commission members wanted Gottlieb to address two questions in particular: "What evidences are there that John has changed and can redirect his behavior? What evidence is there that John can follow his own 'safe plan'?"²⁷²

Two months later, Gottlieb, after consulting a Chicago psychologist with expertise in sexual abuse in workplace settings, completed his assessment of Yoder. The Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference's Church Life Commission, in covering the trip costs to Chicago and the associated medical bill, expected to receive the assessment, which required authorization by Yoder. Yoder signed a release for the Church Life Commission, the Accountability and Support Group, and himself to receive the twenty-three-page document, its length owing, Gottlieb wrote, "to the long history, complexity, and administrative issues

268. Gordon Dyck to C.L.C., Dec. 9, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

269. Summary Observations of the C.L.C. Consultation with Chilton Knudsen, May 26, 1994, p. 4, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; on Knudsen's work, see Darlene K. Haskin, et. al., *Restoring the Soul of the Church* (St. Joseph, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995).

270. A.S.G. Progress Report to C.L.C., May 17, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

271. A.S.G. meeting minutes, Dec. 7, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Gordon Dyck to C.L.C., Dec. 9, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Yoder to Gordon Dyck, Jan. 30, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

272. Addendum to C.L.C. Minutes, Dec. 19, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

surrounding this case."²⁷³ The report would become a thorn in the side of all involved. Because Gottlieb took a "less favorable" view of Yoder's functioning than the earlier, "quite favorable" conclusions reached by McCabe, the psychologist affiliated with Notre Dame, the commission recommended that the Indiana-Michigan conference withdraw Yoder's ministerial credential.²⁷⁴

Yoder, upon reading the new document, immediately revoked the Accountability and Support Group's access to it, claiming in a letter to the commission that "I did not intend to authorize him to circulate . . . the large bulk of damaging raw notes and quotes gratuitously gathered and passed on in Gottlieb's report."²⁷⁵ Yoder expressed anger that copies of the report were now in the hands of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite officials and committee members and demanded that all copies be destroyed.²⁷⁶ The commission disagreed, noting that "since the IN-MI Conference asked for this report, and originally had permission from JHY to receive it, that IN-MI has the right to keep and file it. This report contains information which supports CLC's decision not to return JHY's credential."²⁷⁷

The dispute over Gottlieb's assessment of Yoder's mental health—the right of Mennonite interrogators to have that information—signaled that the disciplinary proceedings would miss the mark of reconciliation and restoration. Yoder was acutely apprehensive about the implications of all this information for his legacy. In 1996 he informed Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials that he was consulting a lawyer about, as he phrased it, "whether the cause of the kingdom is

273. John Gottlieb to Gordon Dyck, March 15, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019. The psychologist consulting with Gottlieb was Alan Friedman, Ph.D. Indiana-Michigan conference officials negotiated the assessors' charges from \$2,860 down to \$2,200. Addendum to C.L.C. minutes, April 6, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

274. Quotations from Sherm Kauffman, "Consultation with Greg Hartzler re: JHY Case," Sept. 18, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Addendum to C.L.C. minutes, April 6, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

275. By the time of Yoder's revocation of the release, members of the C.L.C. as well as Atlee Beechy, chair of the A.S.G., had read the report.—John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck and Atlee Beechy, April 10, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

276. John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck, July 10, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

277. Quotation from C.L.C. report to Indiana-Michigan Executive Committee, Aug. 31, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; C.L.C. Report to Executive Committee, Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

served by perpetuating an archive on the process.”²⁷⁸ For the rest of his life, he would remain in a standoff with Mennonite officials over their right to the report. Yoder’s wishes prevailed after his death, and no known copies of the psychiatric assessment exist, since in 2001 Indiana-Michigan conference officials destroyed their one remaining copy.²⁷⁹

The sociologist Anson Shupe notes that religious institutional bodies faced with having to respond to sexual abuse seek to neutralize conflict in an effort to restore authority in their institutions.²⁸⁰ As long as the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference had a disciplinary hold upon Yoder, Christian concepts of repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration, rooted in biblical justice, all carried important rhetorical functions. This was true for Accountability and Support Group members, Church Life Commission members, and the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference executive committee, which ultimately commended Yoder for further writing and teaching in Mennonite contexts. These ecclesiastical bodies’ interests in bringing the disciplinary matter to an end diverged from Yoder’s interests.

Although the Indiana-Michigan conference committees had failed to establish a restitution fund to benefit Yoder’s victims, opted not to reinstate his credential, had no “safe plan” in place for monitoring his behavior, and had not secured therapy for him in the aftermath of Gottlieb’s psychiatric assessment, in 1996 weary church representatives sought to bring an end to the process.²⁸¹ Conference officials now faced a thankless task: crafting a public statement about Yoder’s status that would be parsed by readers, many with significant stakes in the matter. Contemplating the parties whose interests had to be taken into account,

278. John Howard Yoder to Sherm Kauffman, Dec. 16, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

279. For six years, one remaining copy of the Gottlieb report was held in the restricted Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files. In 2001, more than three years after Yoder’s death, members of Yoder’s family requested that the document be destroyed. In response, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials sought legal counsel and on June 1, 2001, took action to ensure “that the copy of Dr. Gottlieb’s report be deleted from [Yoder’s] file and destroyed.” A note placed in the file states: “The Gottlieb report stated a considerably different point of view from an evaluation conducted by Sheridan McCabe that is included in the file. It cited several deficiencies in the McCabe report that Gottlieb then explored as part of his evaluation and reporting, thus coming to a different conclusion.”—Confidential File for John Howard Yoder Addendum Note to Executive Committee Minutes, June 1, 2001, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

280. Bromley and Cress, “Narratives of Sexual Danger,” 148.

281. After the disciplinary process ended, Indiana-Michigan officials speculated that a denomination-wide restitution fund to benefit victims of sexual abuse might be established with Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries. See Sherm Kauffman to John Howard Yoder, Nov. 20, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

the Indiana-Michigan conference executive secretary, Sherm Kauffman, drew up a diverse list: Yoder and his family; women who had experienced sexual misconduct; the Prairie Street congregation; the Church Life Commission; the Accountability and Support Group; the Executive Committee of the Indiana-Michigan conference; A.M.B.S.; and the wider Mennonite church. Ever hopeful, Kauffman jotted down the word “closure” alongside this brainstorming list.²⁸²

But closure would be elusive. Relations with Yoder had deteriorated over the dissemination of the Gottlieb report, and officials of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference were concerned enough about a potential lawsuit over their retention of the medical record and the hundreds of documents they intended to archive that they sought legal advice.²⁸³ Ultimately, the conference passed over its attorney’s counsel to consider releasing no public statement at all; refraining from releasing a statement, he had argued, would minimize “liability for breach of confidentiality, privacy, and ministerial privilege.”²⁸⁴ But neither did the conference adopt a suggestion by the Accountability and Support Group that the proposed news release invite women who wanted to “make some reconciling contact with Yoder” to phone the Indiana-Michigan conference offices.²⁸⁵ At least seventeen drafts of a press release circulated among Indiana-Michigan Mennonite conference officials, Yoder, and others.

In the end, the heavily-edited statement, sent to Mennonite papers in June 1996, announced that Yoder’s disciplinary process was over. The release commended Yoder “for participating in the process to its conclusion” and encouraged “the church to use his gifts of writing and teaching.”²⁸⁶ Although the release noted that Yoder’s ministerial credential would not be reinstated, no reasons were given, and while it

282. Sherm Kauffman, “Groups with Interests in JHY News Release,” c. 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

283. Minutes of Indiana-Michigan Executive Committee, Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1995, p. 3, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

284. Quotation from Greg Hartzler to Sherm Kauffman, Jan. 17, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

285. Quotation from “Rough Draft #2,” c. 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck and C.L.C., Oct. 2, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

286. Quotations from news release, “Disciplinary Process with John Howard Yoder Draws to a Close,” 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Sherm Kauffman to *Gospel Herald*, *Gospel Evangel*, and *Mennonite Weekly Review*, June 6, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Notes of consultation with Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Sherm Kauffman, Willard Swartley, Ted Koontz, and Gayle Gerber Koontz, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

recommended use of an accountability plan, it offered no details. Nor did the release address the issue of restitution. Although Indiana-Michigan conference officials had hoped that Yoder would write a public statement of apology that they could issue alongside the conference's statement, he declined to do so. In preceding years, Yoder had expressed regret to several women who had confronted him directly, but in 1996 he did not want to issue a blanket statement when he felt he had "no voice" in unresolved matters with the Indiana-Michigan conference.²⁸⁷

BEARING THE COSTS

The press release was a disappointment to the women who four years earlier had reported their experiences to Mennonite officials. Through updates provided by the Accountability and Support Group, they had been kept apprised of the Indiana-Michigan conference's substantive efforts to challenge Yoder. From their perspective, Yoder had been called to repentance by his church but had not repented. The press release provided no evidence that Yoder's behavior had changed, nor assurance that he was unlikely to offend again, and it conveyed little regard for victims and the costs they had borne in bringing Yoder's past to light.²⁸⁸

The harms to women were varied and deeply personal. Some women remained in the Mennonite church, but others, disillusioned by their denomination's seeming inability to confront Yoder, left. Some redirected their careers away from pastoral ministry or church administration. While women and their allies bore the costs of alienation from a church that had earlier nurtured them, the losses were not only personal. Some, critical of institutional responses to Yoder's abuse, asked whether Mennonites produced so few female theologians because Yoder's legacy pushed women away from seminary study and onto alternative vocational paths.²⁸⁹

These questions would linger for decades following the conclusion of Yoder's disciplinary process with the Indiana-Michigan conference. For Yoder, on the other hand, the 1996 press release opened the way for new speaking invitations. In January 1997 he traveled to Harrisonburg, Virginia, as a featured lecturer on peace theology for Eastern Mennonite Seminary's annual leadership training event. The seminary's invitation became a flashpoint for faculty and students dismayed by their school's offer of a public forum for him to speak, given that the press statement

287. Quotation from John Howard Yoder to Sherm Kauffman, March 8, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

288. Good interview with author; Heggen interview with author.

289. Heggen, email to author, Sept. 29, 2014.

released just months earlier had not included an apology.²⁹⁰ The controversy prompted Eastern Mennonite Seminary leaders to request from Yoder a statement “renouncing the wrongs of the past.”²⁹¹ Yoder replied with a five-sentence statement on the Mennonite disciplinary process, saying in part that “I regret the institutional decisions which have permitted the persistence of the misperception that I had not repented or apologized.”²⁹² The invitation to speak stood, and Yoder made his campus presentation as planned, responding to a question posed about what he had learned in the past four years by saying that “there isn’t anyone I’ve hurt that I haven’t wanted to apologize to and I’m grateful for those who have forgiven me.”²⁹³

Through the last year of his life, John Howard Yoder gave substantial energy to scholarly endeavors at the University of Notre Dame. Nearby, at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, a new president, J. Nelson Kraybill, was inaugurated in the spring of 1997. It was a new day for the Mennonite seminary, and contemplating the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference’s advice that the church use Yoder’s gifts of teaching, his former faculty colleagues discussed how they might extend a reconciling gesture.²⁹⁴ An opportunity came during the fall semester, when A.M.B.S. faculty and administrators invited Yoder to teach a seminary course on Christianity, war, and peace. Yoder’s former student and colleague, Willard Swartley, extended the invitation, assuring Yoder that after a thirteen-year ban, he was now welcome on campus. Few students questioned the seminary’s decision,

290. Barbra Graber, “In the Case of the Mennonite Church’s Invitation to Return John Howard Yoder To His Honored Place as a Teacher of Peace and Reconciliation Among Us,” c. Jan. 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; George R. Brunk III to Barbra Graber, Jan. 8, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

291. Duane Sider and George R. Brunk III to John Howard Yoder, Jan. 11, 1997, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

292. John Howard Yoder to George R. Brunk III, Jan. 14, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002. Yoder stipulated that his newly-written statement not be circulated or posted publicly, and E.M.U. officials complied.—Beryl Brubaker, George R. Brunk III, and William Hawk to E.M.U. Community, Jan. 16, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

293. Quotation from Yoder in Christa Eshleman, “Seminary Features Yoder: Theologian’s Return Raises Questions,” *Weather Vane*, v. 42, no. 10, Jan. 23, 1997; see also Goossen, “Campus Protests and John Howard Yoder,” *Mennonite Life* (forthcoming, 2015).

294. Erland Waltner to Willard Swartley, Jake Elias, and Ted Koontz, Oct. 24, 1996, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; Nelson Kraybill email to John Howard Yoder, March 12, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; Ted Koontz interview with author; Ben Ollenburger interview with author, June 7, 2014;

and Yoder's return as a part-time lecturer to campus during the fall of 1997 was uncontroversial.²⁹⁵

Through that fall, elders and others at Prairie Street Mennonite Church continued to hope that Anne and John Yoder would return to worship as members of the congregation. A new pastor was arriving, and the couple attended an informal gathering at his home. On December 28, 1997, the Yoders attended a Sunday service at their longtime Mennonite congregation.²⁹⁶ It marked a return from the Lutheran church and a quiet homecoming; in coming decades, Anne Yoder would regularly attend the Prairie Street church and maintain close friendships there.

Two days after the Prairie Street morning service, on December 30, John Howard Yoder died suddenly at age 70 after suffering a heart attack. In the days and weeks to come, tributes to him emphasized themes of renewal. Nelson Kraybill, the A.M.B.S. president, told the *South Bend Tribune* that "I would regret if his personal failures, which John Yoder acknowledged, were more widely publicized than the process of restoration and forgiveness."²⁹⁷ Atlee Beechy, the Goshen College psychology and peace studies professor who had chaired the Accountability and Support Group through the four-year Mennonite disciplinary process, echoed Kraybill's words as a wise, sensitive approach for those contemplating Yoder's legacy, adding: "May the healing continue!"²⁹⁸

HIGH STAKES FOR MENNONITE IDENTITY

Over the past two decades, emerging scholarship has intensified interest in Yoder's peace theology in view of the sexual abuse perpetrated at A.M.B.S. and far beyond. Public discourse surrounding narratives of Yoder's life, evident from strong interest in his writings, persona, and legacies of abuse, underscore the significance of this story for the collective identity of North American Mennonites. For those who in the mid- to late-twentieth century admired Yoder for carrying notions of Christian nonviolence and discipleship to the larger world, the

295. Yoder completed the teaching of the course, filling in for the regular professor who was on leave.—Nelson Kraybill, "John Howard Yoder as Lecturer in Ethics Course," Oct. 6, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; John Howard Yoder to Willard Swartley, Sept. 18, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; Nelson Kraybill, interview with author, June 6, 2014; Swartley interview with author.

296. John Bender interview with author.

297. "Theologian, N.D. Instructor Yoder Dies," *South Bend Tribune*, Jan. 1, 1998, B-5.

298. Atlee Beechy to Nelson Kraybill, Jan. 6, 1998, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

theologian embodied Mennonitism. In more recent years, many individuals and a number of organizations—including Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Mennonite Church USA—have attempted to influence the representation of his abuses in the press and through electronic media.²⁹⁹ Consequently, this narrative about Yoder and the women he targeted illuminates contested interpretations by claimants with stakes in Mennonite identity and theology. But as long as Yoder remains the key actor in this story, the perspectives of women who challenged his sexual violence and identified its detrimental costs are sidelined.

Yoder's sexualized behaviors cannot be dismissed, as some have suggested, as mere "peccadilloes," a term that implies an indulgent appetite of little consequence.³⁰⁰ Writing in 1992, A.M.B.S. president Marlin Miller described Yoder's behavior as ranging "from what some people would consider bad taste and social ineptitude to what any Mennonite congregation or any Christian institution would consider immoral."³⁰¹ During Yoder's life and since his death, many with knowledge of his abuse have assumed that he struggled with sexual addiction. Others—including some former colleagues and students who recall his social awkwardness—have wondered if Yoder may have had Asperger syndrome.³⁰² Yet these unsubstantiated speculations offer no insight into Yoder's sexual aggressions toward so many women. Still others seeking to understand Yoder's seemingly inexplicable behavior have offered religious explanations: demon possession—that is, sin

299. Observers claiming Mennonite identity, as well as some who do not characterize themselves as Mennonite, have participated in vigorous debates about Yoder's past; cf. Sara Wenger Shenk, "A (Potentially Transformative) Teachable Moment," Sept. 12, 2013, <http://www.ambs.edu/publishing/blog/10153/2013/9/>; Stephanie Krehbiel, "The Woody Allen Problem: How Do We Read Pacifist Theologian (and Sexual Abuser) John Howard Yoder?," *Religion Dispatches* (2014), <http://religiondispatches.org/the-woody-allen-problem-how-do-we-read-pacifist-theologian-and-sexual-abuser-john-howard-yoder/>; and Lisa Schirch, commentary, June 25, 2014, <http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2014/05/01/the-church-discipline-of-john-howard-yoder-2/>.

300. William Klassen email to Ross Lynn Bender, Oct. 9, 2004, online, rossbender.org/AMBS-JHY.pdf.

301. Marlin Miller to Victor Stoltzfus, March 20, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

302. On the Asperger's notion, cf. Ted Grimsrud, "Word and Deed: The Strange Case of John Howard Yoder," *Thinking Pacifism Blog*, Dec. 30, 2010, <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2010/12/30/word-and-deed-the-strange-case-of-john-howard-yoder/>; Glen Stassen, "Glen Stassen's Reflections on the Yoder Scandal," *Thinking Pacifism Blog*, Sept. 24, 2013, <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2013/09/24/glen-stassens-reflections-on-the-yoder-case/>; and David Cramer, David, Jenny Howell, Jonathan Tran and Paul Martens, "Scandalizing John Howard Yoder," <http://theotherjournal.com>, July 7, 2014, note 7.

requiring exorcism via the strongest spiritual resources available through Yoder's own professed Christian faith.³⁰³

Admirers of Yoder's theology have cited these and other notions in attempting to explain his behavior. Yet those who offer medicalized theories about whether Yoder struggled with undiagnosed Asperger's, as well as those who gloss over the Mennonites' disciplinary processes as triumphant restoration, continue in the tradition of Marlin Miller by keeping the focus on Yoder himself rather than on the consequences of his actions.³⁰⁴ Such explanations deflect attention away from institutional complicity and reveal Yoder's followers' attempts to explain away his misdeeds so that they might reclaim his theology.³⁰⁵ Just as Miller, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, used his authority to silence Elena because he held Yoder in such high esteem, a number of recent interpreters have continued to minimize Yoder's history of sexual abuse while highlighting his theological career.³⁰⁶

During the 1990s, Yoder himself was dismissive of the various moral, psychological, and religious diagnoses that institutional challengers set before him. But he had weighty supporters who argued against the monitoring of his "internal attitudes and convictions" even though they noted that Yoder "may not quite understand why the women are hurt. He may believe his theory about sexuality is right."³⁰⁷ Those who took this position viewed Yoder's restoration as essential. In 1996, at the conclusion of Yoder's disciplinary process, the ethicists Stanley Hauerwas and Glen Stassen commended Mennonite officials for work well done and for a satisfying endpoint, since "Churches have a tremendous need for his gifts."³⁰⁸ For Hauerwas and Stassen, eminent leaders in their fields, restoring Yoder to *his* place of eminence was only right, since, in their words, "Mennonites are admired for Christian

303. Ted Koontz, journal entry, Feb. 14, 1992, provided by Ted Koontz, in the author's possession.

304. Invoking Asperger syndrome in connection with sexual abuse also perpetuates prejudice; on scholars' irresponsibility in this matter, see Hamilton and Lambelet, "A Dark Theme Revisited: How to Read Yoder's Sexualized Violence."

305. See, for example, "The Yoder File," editorial, *The Christian Century*, Aug. 20, 2014, p. 7.

306. Cf. Glenn Friesen, "The Church Discipline of John Howard Yoder: Legal and Religious Considerations," 2014, <http://www.members.shaw.ca/chronicle/Yoder.html> and Mark Thiessen Nation, coauthored with Marva Dawn, "On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder," Sept. 23, 2013, <http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013-/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/>.

307. Quotation from Hauerwas and Nation to Yoder Church Discipline Committee, July 7, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

308. Glen Stassen and Stanley Hauerwas to Sherm Kauffman, July 22, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

discipline and sometimes criticized for not practicing enough forgiveness and grace.”³⁰⁹ From afar, Hauerwas and Stassen cast a glow on a process that Yoder himself dismissed. After months of struggle with Indiana-Michigan conference representatives over their right to retain Gottlieb’s psychiatric report, Yoder concluded that “the initially stated goal of restoration has been abandoned.”³¹⁰

Others interpreting the same events have focused less on restoration and more on reconciliation. Olive branches extended in the form of visits, calls, meal invitations, and cordial notes from elders and others at the Prairie Street Mennonite Church encouraged the return of the Yoders to their Mennonite congregation.³¹¹ Similarly, efforts in 1996 and 1997 at A.M.B.S. to invite Yoder back to campus brought a renewed relationship, in limited measure, between Yoder and his former base. One A.M.B.S. administrator told Yoder in 1996 that “the concept of shunning” no longer carried the day.³¹² Still, reconciliation between Yoder and the seminary was compromised by an institutional past burdened with secrets.³¹³

The promised restoration of Yoder as churchman, championed by Hauerwas and Stassen, offered reassurance to anyone seeking to read Yoder as a credible theologian. The goal of reconciliation, plumbed diligently by Prairie Street congregants as well as by A.M.B.S. leaders, highlighted the conciliatory stance of some influential Mennonites toward Yoder. But few Prairie Street or A.M.B.S. representatives situated their hopes for “reconciliation” in Yoder’s relations with women he had sexually harassed and abused. A more expansive form of reconciliation had been envisioned by Indiana-Michigan conference committee members, who initially worked toward sufficient restitution to be made available for women victims and the development of a “safe plan” to ensure a lower likelihood of recidivism. But these reconciling gestures never occurred, in part because Yoder had earlier—in his theological

309. *Ibid.*

310. John Howard Yoder to Sherm Kauffman, Dec. 16, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

311. Church records also indicate discord among members and pastors through the mid-1990s over the theologian’s estrangement from his congregation.—Prairie Street Task Force on Church Leadership, memo to congregation, April 21, 1996, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files; Harold Yoder interview with author; Simon Gingerich interview with author.

312. Quotation from Gerald Gerbrandt to John Howard Yoder, May 13, 1996, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

313. Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author.

disputation with Marlin Miller over sexual ethics—honed his skills of rationalizing to control the process.³¹⁴

Yoder's ideas about sexuality were at the core of his relationships with many people. These ideas were infused with his theology. In December 1997, a week before his death, in an email to a woman twenty-five years younger whom he had never met but had noticed at a conference, Yoder referred to his own recent experiences with Mennonite discipline. He added that "the [reconciliation] process lost ground" and asked her to aid him "in a confidential exchange about how it might be possible."³¹⁵ The recipient, who knew of his history of sexual misconduct, never responded. But Yoder's appeal to her, calling out to engage confidentially, could be read as a quiet reverberation of his behavioral patterns more than two decades earlier when he had enticed young women with "A Call for Aid," saying, "I need your help. . . . They are delicate themes."³¹⁶

Mennonite denominational responses to Yoder's legacy of sexual abuse show the entanglement of a theologian who had long professed a biblical frame for church discipline—*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault*—with institutional figures reluctant, even unwilling, to adjust the frame to mitigate effects of violence and power. During the 1970s and 1980s, leaders at A.M.B.S. used secrecy to guard the reputation of the seminary, and, even more tellingly, guarded Yoder's embodied Mennonitism, a faith tradition that they saw him as representing ably and admirably to the broader world.

But in engaging Yoder's ideas about sexual ethics, Miller and his Covenant Group hurt many people, including themselves.³¹⁷ Their exertions were echoed in the 1990s and beyond within fraternal Mennonite institutions—including Herald Press and the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—that aimed to preserve Mennonite identity and polity through precarious negotiations in the fallout of Yoder's actions. By the late twentieth century, some of the secrecy that had characterized Mennonite institutions' responses to Yoder's abuses gave way to new paradigms, most notably a critique of victim-blaming and a reading of Matthew 18 that contextualizes significant power

314. A.S.G. Progress Report to C.L.C., May 17, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

315. John Howard Yoder email to "Rosalie" (pseudonym), Dec. 22, 1997, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

316. Yoder, "A Call for Aid," 1974, p. 1.

317. Ted Koontz interview with author; Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author; Marcus Smucker interview with author; Richard Kauffman interview with author.

imbalances between parties.³¹⁸ Meanwhile, this tragedy reflected how silence, patriarchal assumptions, and concern for damage control enabled an “experiment” that was never an experiment at all, but a theological idea carried along by Mennonite interests for far too long.³¹⁹

318. Cf. Ted Koontz to John Howard Yoder, March 10, 1992, provided by Ted Koontz, in the author’s possession, and John K. Stoner to James Lapp, received April 4, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

319. For perceptive commentary on institutional failures in the handling of Yoder’s abusiveness, see George R. Brunk III to Sherm Kauffman, Jan. 15, 1997, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

Sexual Abuse by Church Leaders and Healing for Victims

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Abstract: Sexual abuse by a church leader is an egregious violation of professional ethics and a serious misuse of the power of the pastor/teacher role. The resultant trauma for victims affects all aspects of their lives. Churches and their institutions have not consistently responded in appropriate ways to reports of abuse and have too often, by their denial or lack of effective intervention and care, further traumatized victims. Congregations can be places of healing if they believe victims and respond appropriately, if their worship is sensitive to victims, if they provide ongoing accompaniment for victims and those who love them, and if they make a commitment to work diligently to prevent further abuse.

Although Mennonites have a well-developed theology of nonviolence and are leaders in the field of peacemaking, they have not been consistently successful in protecting those entrusted to their care from sexually abusive pastors and leaders.¹ Like

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1. Because many leaders of church institutions are ordained, I will sometimes use "clergy" to refer to both pastors and leaders. The dynamics and resultant issues of abuse are similar. I also use male pronouns when referring to abusive clergy and leaders. This is not so much for stylistic reasons as it is an effort to reflect the reality that reports of a female clergy member sexually abusing a parishioner are extremely rare. In my many years of working with victims of clergy sexual abuse, I have yet to encounter a victim who was abused by a woman pastor. I am also aware that there are boys and young men who have been sexually abused by a Mennonite male teacher, youth pastor, evangelist, or church leader. The resultant issues have been devastating for these male victims. Because my clinical practice and work in the church have primarily been with female victims and male abusers and because the majority of publicly exposed cases have been of this gender configuration, I will address primarily issues related to females abused by males. That said, we need to create more safe places for male victims to tell their stories and find the help they need to heal from the trauma of their abuse. One of the common questions of male victims is, "Am I a homosexual? I didn't think so before my abuse but why would he have been attracted to me if I'm not?" In such instances it is important to remind the victim that rape and sexual abuse are not primarily about sex but about abuse of power. It was often the victim's vulnerability and not his sexual orientation that made him attractive to the predatory male abuser. Many males who abuse boys and

virtually all other denominations, Mennonites do not have reliable statistics available to know the full extent of leader sexual abuse. Webs of secrecy built around perpetrators, disbelief at accusations of sexual assault, and unhelpful responses to others who have disclosed abuses combine to make it less likely that victims will report abuses. Anecdotal information and research provided by sociologist Conrad L. Kanagy, however, suggest that Mennonites have rates of sexual abuse at least equal to that of the general population.² Because Mennonites' history of suffering and martyrdom is central to their identity, and because nonviolence, peace, love of enemies, and forgiveness are Mennonite core principles, victims may find it harder to resist violation and to report abuses.

Studies of ecumenical groups of clergy have found that 38.6 percent of clergy members self-report a sexual involvement they consider inappropriate with members of their congregation. Additionally, 76.5 percent of those surveyed said they knew a clergy colleague who had been sexually involved with a member of their congregation.³ A 1998 study by J. W. Thoburn and J. O. Balswisch found that among all professional helpers clergy have the highest rate of sexual exploitation.⁴ Research by the United Church of Canada indicates that women are more likely to experience sexual harassment in their church than in the workplace.⁵

For years women have been reporting sexual abuse by trusted church leaders. Too often the church did not believe them. Even if the women were believed, those women who disclosed the abuse were frequently considered troublemakers, enticing seductresses, predatory females, or loose women. Reports of sexual abuse are still often met with anger directed at the victim for besmirching the reputation of the church and the accused, or for causing distress to his family. In rare cases the abusive leader or pastor has been fired, but even then a common pattern has been to maintain secrecy about the reason for his dismissal. Some abusive leaders have

young men are not homosexually oriented themselves but are sexually aroused by the vulnerability of their victims.

2. Conrad L. Kanagy, *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2006). All of the case studies and stories included in my book, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993), are Mennonite stories.

3. Kathryn A. Flynn, *The Sexual Abuse of Women by Members of the Clergy* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), 3.

4. J. W. Thoburn and J. O. Balswisch, "Demographic Data on Extra-marital Sexual Behavior in the Ministry," *Pastoral Psychology* 46, no. 6 (1998), 447-457.

5. Flynn, *Sexual Abuse of Women by Members of the Clergy*, 4.

negotiated deals with their churches or institutions whereby the leader agreed to resign and leave his position in exchange for an institutional promise to never reveal the reason for his termination.

Many victims of clergy sexual abuse never tell. They have watched other victims blamed, denigrated, and shunned. Many will never risk becoming outcasts in their church, a significant social and spiritual community for Mennonites.

WHAT IS CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE?

The language used to describe the sexual involvement of a church leader with someone under his care or influence has often distracted us from properly understanding and addressing the problem. Marie Fortune, an early and prominent advocate for victims, emphasizes the need to correctly frame and name the problem.⁶ It is neither appropriate nor helpful to see clergy sexual abuse as primarily an issue of deficient individual morality or to consider it “an affair,” a “sexual relationship,” or even “adultery.” These terms imply a mutuality and consent that is lacking when a trusted leader becomes sexually involved with a parishioner; authentic consent requires an equality of power in a relationship. It is instead, *abuse*.⁷

Clergy sexual abuse occurs when one who is in a position of trust or power takes advantage of someone entrusted to his care. It is an egregious exploitation of power, a profound violation of professional ethics, and a repudiation of Christian love and care. Peter Rutter, author of *Sex in the Forbidden Zone: When Men in Power—Therapists, Doctors, Clergy, Teachers, and Others—Betray Women’s Trust*, warns of sexual behavior, or erotic expression or interest that occurs in “the forbidden zone”—namely, any professional relationship of trust and unequal power.⁸ Sexualized behaviors that are “forbidden” may or may not include actual physical touch. They may include unusual attention, including gifts, frequent social telephone calls, letters, private visits, or

6. Marie Fortune, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989).

7. Although rare, there are known cases of a needy, previously wounded woman who has tried to sexually seduce a pastor. It is still the pastor’s professional responsibility and duty to protect the woman—even if only from herself—and to maintain appropriate boundaries. This is *always* the responsibility of the professional, the person with the most power.

8. Peter Rutter, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone: When Men in Power—Therapists, Doctors, Clergy, Teachers, and Others—Betray Women’s Trust* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1989).

attempts to develop a “special” relationship. Additional behaviors that are not permitted, according to the Mennonite Church’s Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures, include:⁹

- Flirtatious propositions, talk, or innuendo;
- Graphic or degrading comments about another person’s appearance, dress, or anatomy;
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures;
- Sexual jokes or offensive gestures;
- Explicit descriptions of a minister’s own sexual experiences;
- Abuse of familiarities or diminutives such as “honey,” “baby,” or “dear”;
- Inappropriate or unwanted physical contact such as touching, hugging, pinching, patting, or kissing;
- Whistling or catcalls;
- Leering.

PASTORAL POWER

Many pastors, feeling overworked, underappreciated, and underpaid, are blind to the inherent power of their profession. Miriam Stark Parent, a clinical psychologist and professor of pastoral counseling and psychology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, found that ministers often have an ambivalent or distorted attitude toward issues of power and authority. They tend to minimize their power and, thus, their responsibility for maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries.¹⁰

The strong Mennonite emphasis on “servant leadership” and “the priesthood of all believers” can make it particularly uncomfortable to talk about the power of church leaders. Such hesitancy may make it more difficult to understand the inherent, often subtle power of the pastoral role and may make this power easier to abuse.

The relationship between a male pastor and a female parishioner, or between a male professor and a female student, is in many ways a microcosm of the broader cultural relationship between women and men, which remains one of a significant

9. See attachment 2 in *Justice Making: The Church Responds to Clergy Misconduct, a Companion Piece to Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Police and Procedures*. <http://resources.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/JusticeMakingTheChurchRespondsToClergyMisconduct.pdf>.

10. Miriam Stark Parent, “Boundaries and Roles in Ministry Counseling,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 8, no. 2 (2005), 1-25.

imbalance of power. For example, men, in general, have greater *earning power*. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women with similar levels of education and experience as men doing the same job earn only \$0.77 for every dollar men earn. In some minority groups the wage gap is even wider. African-American women earn only \$0.69 for every dollar African-American men earn. In this country, Latinas earn only \$0.58 for every dollar earned by Latinos.¹¹ Money is power in many situations, and thus, many women feel, and are in fact, disempowered in relation to men because of this earning disparity and their economic vulnerability.

In general, men also have more *political power* than women. This imbalance is reflected in the fact that in 2014, only 20 of the 100 U.S. senators, 79 of the 435 members of the House of Representatives, and 5 of the 50 U.S. governors were women. To date, there has not been a woman president. Journalists refer to the physical appearance of female candidates and women politicians more often than they do to men's appearance and refer to women more often by their first name.

Moreover, most men are *physically* more powerful than most women of similar age. Knowing that they are vulnerable to being physically overpowered significantly alters women's experience of the world. Mary Dickson is a writer and co-producer of the national PBS documentary "No Safe Place: Violence Against Women" and is the winner of the 1996 Vivian Castleberry Award for Commentary from the Association of Women Journalists for her article "A Woman's Worst Nightmare." Dickson confirms what mental health therapists report anecdotally—that there are significant differences between what men and women report fearing from each other: men fear being unappreciated, disrespected, or humiliated by women. Women, on the other hand, fear being battered, raped, or killed by men.¹²

To understand the dynamics of clergy abuse, it is important to note some complex intra psychic and cultural dynamics related to femininity, masculinity, and religion. In general, women have less *religious* authority and power than men. For many people, based

11. USA QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau (2013).—www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html. See also Catherine Hill, "The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap" (2014) in the A.A.U.W. publication *Economic Justice*, www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/.

12. Mary Dickson, "A Woman's Worst Nightmare" (1996) www.pbs.org/kued/nosafeface/articles/nightmare.htm/.

on sexist interpretations of certain biblical texts (Genesis 2 and I Corinthians 11:7-9, for example) masculinity is associated with divinity and moral superiority while femininity is associated with defectiveness and moral inferiority. Research suggests that Christian women have been taught both explicitly and implicitly that they are morally defective because of Eve's sin and therefore less capable than men of making right moral judgments.¹³ As a result, women may grow up not able to trust themselves when their sense of right or wrong differs from that of a man in authority over her. When a pastor or church leader says sexual contact between them is good and right, a woman may find it difficult to trust her own internal sense of right and wrong and stand strong in opposition to the sexual seductions and assaults of a church leader. Her moral agency may be dangerously compromised when someone with spiritual authority is manipulating her for his own perverse sexual pleasure.

Women's exclusion from positions of leadership and authority in many churches imbues them with a sense of specific inferiority reinforced by the fact that the dominant image of God for many people and the one most frequently used in public worship is *God the Father*. Of course Jesus was male as were the twelve named disciples in his inner circle. Even the angels named in the Bible, although presumably asexual and spiritual in nature, all have masculine names. Throughout recorded history, most pastors, priests, bishops, and all popes are and have been male. Thus, when the exclusion of women is linked to the notion of divinity as male, it may have psychological meaning even more damaging to her self-concept and her ability to say "No!" to an abusive church leader than exclusion from other groups.

In addition to the generalized power of males in our patriarchal culture, pastors and church leaders are granted significant and unique powers. Because many people consider the pastor to be God's representative and the mediator between God and the congregation, there is a transcendent and symbolic dimension that gives male pastors great psychological and *spiritual power* over parishioners, particularly women. Peter Rutter, a psychiatrist, notes that the power of a pastor over his congregation is greatly enhanced by his clerical authority, if he wishes to exercise it, to

13. Carolyn Holderread Heggen, "Dominance/Submission Role Beliefs, Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance in Christian Laywomen" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1989).

mediate people's status with God.¹⁴ Thus, church leaders may represent the very power and authority of God.

Karen Lebacqz and Ronald Barton, authors of *Sex in the Parish*, highlight the *numinous* dimension of the pastorate and the *pedestal effect* that comes from dispensing the sacraments and representing the divine.¹⁵ This "God factor" can cloud victims' perceptions and diminish their ability to detect warning signs that could keep themselves safe from a predatory church leader.

Psychiatrists Carl Jung, M. Scott Peck and others have observed the close relationship between spiritual longing and sexual desires. The human quest for intimacy with God often taps into an energy that feels similar to sexual passion. Our spiritual longing reminds us of our longing for intimacy with another human being. As Robert Carlson observed, "The effort to find God opens that same well of yearning that exists in all of us and sometimes encourages us to sexual desire."¹⁶ In both sexual and spiritual experiences we lower our defenses; ego boundaries become less defined. In church we also practice common kinds of "courting" behaviors—we often dress up and are on our best behavior.

It is important to make a clear distinction between sexual feelings and inappropriate sexual acts. Sexual feelings, particularly in relationships of close contact as in the church, are natural and often unavoidable. But church leaders are expected to avoid acting upon these feelings and violating appropriate sexual boundaries.

Church leaders have a *power of access* that is unique to their profession. Church leaders and those under their care and influence assume they have access to congregants' homes and hospital rooms, their history and secrets, their vulnerability, and even their souls. Church leaders may have knowledge about us that exceeds even that of close family members. Pastors can claim an intimacy not normally granted others because of the confessional role they play in lives of church members and because their parishioners believe they can trust them.

Moreover, unlike most helping professionals, pastors and church leaders function without close supervision and with minimal accountability. The cultural status and prestige they enjoy opens doors to them unlike any other profession and for which many are ill suited and unprepared.

14. Rutter, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, 27-28.

15. Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton, *Sex in the Parish* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 110-111.

16. Robert Carlson, "Battling Sexual Indiscretion," *Ministry* 60, no. 1(1987).

RESULTANT ISSUES FOR VICTIMS OF CLERGY ABUSE

Like most denominations, the Mennonite Church and her institutions have not consistently responded in appropriate, helpful ways to reports of sexual abuse by a pastor or leader.¹⁷ Too little attention has been given to the needs of victims and too much has focused on damage control, containment, protection of the perpetrator's public image, his rehabilitation and restoration, and the preservation of reputations of both perpetrators and institutions.

Very little attention, by contrast, has been paid to the actual experiences of victims as violated persons. Care for victims has most often happened outside of church structures. The voices clamoring for justice and care for the abused have often been those of other victims who have found healing support elsewhere.

The therapeutic community focused on trauma and the victims who have begun their healing have much to teach us. They know that to be sexually abused by a church leader is to experience a devastating trauma that leaves deep scars. The English word *trauma* comes from an ancient Greek word that means a "wound" or "an injury inflicted upon the body by an act of violence." Current trauma studies have extended the understanding of trauma to include not only wounding to the visible body but also to the brain, the emotions and psyche, and the soul.¹⁸ While invisible, these wounds often have a more damaging effect on one's well-being than more obvious physical wounds.

There is a growing awareness in the therapeutic community that surviving sexual abuse is similar to surviving war. Many victims of both war and abuse experience "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" (P.T.S.D.). There are three clusters of P.T.S.D. symptoms:

Re-experiencing the trauma event through intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares, and disturbing mental images.

Avoidance symptoms that include emotional numbing, dissociating from what is presently happening, not wanting to talk about the trauma, and avoiding people, places, sounds, and smells that remind them of the trauma.

17. For a summary of the steps that have been taken in the Mennonite Church since the 1980s to raise awareness, see the essay by Linda Gehman Peachey elsewhere in this volume.

18. Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 12.

Persistent neurological hyper-arousal expressed in an exaggerated startle reflex, constant expectation of harm, insomnia, and an inability to fully relax.

Judith Herman, a psychiatrist and trauma expert, has defined trauma as an affliction of helplessness in response to overwhelming events.¹⁹ Psychological trauma involves feelings of intense fear, helplessness, confusion, loss of control, and the threat of annihilation. Herman describes two core responses to trauma:

1. Profound sense of powerlessness with a resultant sense of extreme helplessness and terror
2. Disconnection from systems of attachment and meaning.

Following an in-depth study of the effects of clergy sexual abuse on twenty-five women from eleven states, Kathryn A. Flynn, the author of *The Sexual Abuse of Women by Members of the Clergy*, observes that “the disconnection resulting from the traumatic experience affects systems of attachment. Trauma shatters the construction of the self, violates a victim’s faith in a natural or divine order, and injures one’s sense of human connection, safety and trust.”²⁰

While the trauma of abuse is multifaceted and inevitably varies among individual victims based on their past history, their personality, and their inner and outer resources, all victims of abuse suffer long-term consequences even though they may not always connect their symptoms to the trauma experienced. All aspects of their life will be hurt—their sense of belovedness; their sense of dignity and worth; their sense of agency and control over their behavior and emotions, their body, and life choices; their ability to trust and have healthy relationships; and their spirituality.

It is no wonder that many victims of abuse struggle with eating disorders, self-mutilating behaviors, insomnia, depression, anxiety, and addictions. When the abuse has been done by someone who preached and taught in God’s name, the spiritual and psychological damage may be so deep that victims never recover their faith in God or the church.

A recurring sentiment expressed by victims of clergy abuse is disappointment and a sense of betrayal that their church has not paid appropriate attention to their suffering. Too often the focus

19. Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1997).

20. Flynn, *Sexual Abuse of Women by Members of the Clergy*, 32.

has been on protecting the reputation of the church and on ways to restore the offender to ministry again. Victims who have broken silence have too consistently been treated as the guilty party for “making a good man fall into sin,” for upsetting the equilibrium of congregational life, and for damaging the Christian reputation and witness in their community. Many have sensed the church wishes they would just “go away!” And many have left—their pain compounded when church friends and staff do not stay in touch, reach out in supportive, loving ways, or even acknowledge their absence or their trauma.

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO TO HELP VICTIMS HEAL?

The church’s response to those who have experienced clergy sexual abuse can either increase their trauma or help them heal and be restored to faith and their spiritual community. The following suggestions come from years of professionally accompanying victims who have been abused by a pastor or church leader.

1. *Response to a Victim’s Disclosure of Clergy Abuse*

Believe her and express moral outrage. Assure her it is not her fault.

Keep the primary focus on the victim’s pain and need for safety and support. Don’t be sidetracked by concerns for damage control.

Listen! Don’t initially ask a lot of questions or attempt to obtain specific details of the abuse.

2. *Follow-up Steps*

With the help of professionals outside the church, determine if a crime has been committed. If so, report it to the authorities.

Assign an advocate to walk with the victim and protect her from retaliation by the abuser or by those who might wish to protect him, his reputation, and the institution.

Assure her and her family that they are not alone and will not be abandoned.

Arrange for her to have a professional assessment of the physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual damage she may have suffered. Try to find someone outside the abuser’s denomination to do this and secure church funds to pay the expense.

3. *Congregational or Institutional Issues*

Plan a congregational meeting to share appropriate information, to educate, and to answer questions such as “Why didn’t she just say ‘no’?” “Why can’t she just forgive him?”

Help members use appropriate language. When members refer to what happened as “adultery” or an “affair,” explain why these terms often mask a serious violation of the pastoral role that is more appropriately considered sexual abuse or sexual violence.

Hold a service of confession and lament to acknowledge the ways in which victims were not protected and to mourn the pain that the abuse has caused them, their loved ones, and the congregation.

Explore acts of restitution and justice-making for victims.

Place written resources about abuse in the church library and other readily accessible locations. Share information about local support groups and online resources.²¹

4. *Victim Sensitive Worship*

In public prayers and times of worship, name the sin of abuse and the pain of victims who have been betrayed by a leader or trusted person.

During times of confession, name the church’s failure to appropriately discipline abusive leaders and protect vulnerable women.

Use laments and prayers in public worship that victims may have written as part of their healing journey.

5. *Ongoing Accompaniment with the Victim*

Let her be angry; help her use her anger as energy to move beyond despair and depression toward healing. Share Psalms with her that express the writer’s anger. Assure her that God can handle her anger.

Do not push her to quickly forgive her abuser or encourage her to immediately be reconciled to him. Reconciliation and restoration cannot happen without his true repentance, self-awareness, and transformation.

Empower the victim to tell her story. In bearing witness to her experience of violation she takes control away from her

21. For references to some of this material see the essay by Linda Gehman Peachey elsewhere in this issue.

abuser and the institutions that protected him and takes an important step toward reclaiming control over her own life.

Point out signs of strength and healing you see in her. Help her identify and celebrate manifestations of God's healing and faithfulness.

Explore with her the possibility of creating a personal ritual of healing to be shared with a small group of friends. Make suggestions but let her decide which elements would be personally meaningful for her.

Help her find a "survivor's mission" —a way to use her tears as motivation and energy for helping others. This can help her move from being a helpless victim to an empowered and motivated agent of transformation and can be a powerful step in helping redeem her suffering.

6. *Working at Prevention of Future Abuse*

Make a genuine commitment to eradicate abuse by church leaders. Make public and concrete this commitment.

Teach ministers-in-training the ethical requirements of their profession; help them identify and heal their psycho-social wounds; and assist them in developing a meaningful personal spirituality.

Create, implement, and carefully monitor policies designed to prevent abuse and ensure that offenders are held accountable.

Examine religious teachings and practices that may make it difficult for Mennonite women to protect themselves effectively from sexual predators in the church. Consider how teachings about redemptive suffering, the need to quickly forgive, to refrain from lawsuits, to love your enemies, to not be angry, to return evil with good, and to submit to men may be related to abuse.

Analyze known cases of boundary violations to learn more about the dynamics of leader abuse and institutional responses that were or were not effective in stopping the abuse.

Challenge patriarchy as contrary to God's intentions for humanity. Abuse of women and children is frighteningly logical, common, and normative in cultures and institutions where men are given more power and respect than women, where masculinity is seen as a clearer reflection of the divine than is femininity, and where women are taught to trust men

more than their own inner moral compass. The world may continue to elevate the man with the most academic degrees, power, and social influence. But the church must use different criteria for choosing leaders, making decisions, and living together.

CONCLUSION

Sexual abuse by a pastor or church leader causes devastating trauma. The resultant symptoms have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on all aspects of the lives and relationships of victims. Too often the church's response has inflicted further trauma on victims, has allowed perpetrators to deny their sinful violence, and has put others at risk. If we will hold perpetrators accountable and take a firm stand against abuse and the misuse of power, if we will open our hearts to victims and be tender witnesses to their anguish, if we will let them teach us about the trauma and injustice of sexual violence, then Mennonites might rightly claim to be people of peace and effective mediators of God's healing and amazing grace.

Announcing the First Annual Schafer-Friesen Research Fellowship

The Schafer-Friesen fellowship is awarded annually by the Mennonite Historical Library (MHL) at Goshen College to support scholarship in Reformation and Anabaptist History.

First priority for the award is to individuals doing advanced research using the resources of the Mennonite Historical Library. The award will support travel costs to the Mennonite Historical Library, up to three weeks of room and board, and a small stipend.

The Fellowship may also be used, secondarily, to support publications on Reformation and Anabaptist topics.

To apply, please send a letter of interest, along with a one-page research plan and budget to John D. Roth, MHL, Goshen College, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526, by March 1, 2015.

The Schafer-Friesen Research Fellowship was
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Congregational Responses to Abuse and Trauma: The Persistent Hope of Shalom

REBECCA SLOUGH*

Abstract: Physical and sexual abuse and its attendant trauma create long-lasting effects in the lives of victims. The process of emerging as survivors is long and challenging. It requires wise and empathetic companions to attend them along the way. The reality of abuse challenges many of the church's theological claims about healing, forgiveness, and justice. Congregations skilled in the ministry of healing will exercise theological imagination grounded in God's promises of belovedness, release, new life, reconciliation, and shalom. They draw on Christian practices of bearing witness, lament, prayer, discernment, and celebration to support victims of abuse as they emerge as survivors.

Healthcare providers, therapists, social workers, and law enforcement authorities are among the first people to hear the stories or see the evidence of physical abuse. Victims may later turn to pastors or members of congregations.¹ Occurrences of abuse present immediate complications for the people nearest to the victim and the victimizer. Congregations are rarely prepared to handle the chaos that the revelation of such acts stirs.

This essay explores ways that Christian congregations committed to the hope of shalom might conceive of their ministry with people who have suffered physical or sexual abuse and live with the aftermath of its

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1. This essay's primary focus is on physical and sexual abuse occurring on an intimate level in families, among people who know one another, or in churches, schools, or work environments. It does not address the complicated issues arising from clergy or pastoral sexual misconduct with congregational members or participants. Along with the victims of clergy misconduct, congregations also suffer from the abuse perpetrated by clergy, which limits their capacities to respond to the victim as well as to the victimizer. See *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, ed. Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995). The essay also does not intend to address the consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D.) resulting from war, natural disasters, catastrophic events, political intimidation, or torture.

trauma.² Although it has often failed in this healing ministry,³ the Christian church also has wisdom and practices rooted in God's promises of healing, new life, and shalom that can theologically orient victims and survivors in their recovery within a framework of hope.

Any sustained look at the realities of abuse makes the heart heavy. Trauma is an overwhelming experience for its victims and for those who are helping them recover their sense of self, dignity, and purpose. Deep sadness and grief often give way to anger. Wise congregational leaders and pastors will be grieved, but not shocked, to learn about abuse in their midst. They know that humans are a jumble of fears, hurts, emotions, desires, and motivations who exercise the extremely dangerous gift of free will. They know from experience that human relationships can be profoundly distorted. They know that recovery from abuse is hard and holy work.

Nothing in this essay should be construed to circumvent the necessity of medical treatment, professional counseling, the involvement of protective services, or law enforcement. Few congregations have the resident professional knowledge or skills to help those who have been traumatized by abuse.⁴ Yet, at our best, Christians rooted in the hope of God's promised shalom have developed the essential virtues of love,

2. I use "abuse" for physical, sexual, emotional violence of whatever magnitude. I have connected assault with abuse, but recognize that abuse often persists over a long period of time. "Trauma" refers to the variety of responses experienced through the body, mind, or emotions following abuse—e.g., overwhelming fear, memory flashbacks, dissociation, "freezing" of responses or physical immobilization, panic attacks, or flight responses. See Bessel van der Kolk, et al., *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1996), 421-423; Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992; 1997).

3. Father Thomas Doyle, a canon lawyer and specialist on clergy abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, has stressed that churches and religious organizations usually minimize the significance of victims' complaints to protect their reputations or their recognized authority. Victims are perceived to be a threat to the church. Often an empathetic response from church officials like "we are sorry this has happened to you" or "we grieve that you have suffered" can start the healing process.—Presentation to the faculty of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Oct. 20, 2014. See also Thomas Dyle, A. W. Richard Sipe, and Patrick J. Wall, *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes: The Catholic Church's 2000-Year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuses* (Los Angeles: Volt Press, 2006.) While the ecclesial structure of the Roman Catholic Church may create an environment in which victimizers can be protected, the literature on clergy and spousal abuse in Protestants churches also cites the preponderance of inadequate responses of church officials that fail to take victims' complaints seriously and, as a result, do little or nothing in response.

4. It must be clear that I am not a social worker, therapist, or clinician. I am writing as an empathetic congregational member thinking through ways in which I and my congregation could support and serve as companions to victim-survivors of physical or sexual abuse.

patience, humility, and discernment needed to accompany victims who are emerging as survivors.

THE COST OF ABUSE AND TRAUMA: RELATIONSHIPS LOST OR DESTROYED

Physical and sexual abuse violates one's basic personal integrity and destroys her or his sense of wholeness. Thoughts and emotions split from the body's physical sensations; the mind and the heart operate in separate realms. The trauma resulting from abuse creates a cascade of losses: loss of safety; loss of trust; loss of a sense of self; loss of place; loss of dignity; loss of family or community, or both; loss of innocence; loss of the hope for love; loss of perspective; loss of agency; loss of meaning; loss of purpose; loss of faith; and possibly loss of God. The vacuum created by these losses is often filled with a sense of deadness, with constant fear and anxiety, hyper-vigilance, shame, or depression.⁵ Trauma can result from single, multiple, or constant abusive incidents and the circumstances surrounding them. A person's body remembers these incidents in some form or another, and becomes conditioned to trauma.

Victimizers may also experience losses from the abuse they inflict: loss of credibility; loss of trustworthiness; loss of moral integrity or authority; loss of dignity; loss of perspective; on occasion loss of family or community, or both; and loss of power to control others by force. The vacuum created by these losses is often filled with denial, indignation, anger, fear, self-righteousness, possibly guilt, possibly shame, and possibly depression. Victimizers' bodies remember the intoxicating arousal and power of violence.

Victims, not victimizers, are most likely to seek out wise and trustworthy pastors or members of congregations.⁶ The abuse they have

5. This list of losses is compiled from the work of Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33-55; van der Kolk, *Traumatic Stress*, 9-15, 443-447; and Carolyn Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993), 29-45.

6. James Newton Poling writes that most victimizers "do not acknowledge the truth of what they have done and most never seek or take the opportunity of therapy. . . . Denial is the typical defense against accountability for sexual violence. . . ." *Understanding Male Violence: Pastoral Care Issues* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 94. "Many sexual offenders outright deny the abuse," writes Carolyn Holderread Heggen. "Others minimize the full extent of their abusive behavior and acknowledge only a small part of their actions. . . . Some offenders admit to the behaviors but deny responsibility. Sometimes they blame their drinking, stress at work, their wives' lack of interest in sex, their own 'over-developed sex drive'. These behaviors allow offenders to externalize the problem and keep them from

suffered may be in the distant past or may have just occurred. Their victimizers may be a member of the congregation, may be known in the larger community, or long dead. Victims often enter recovery work without reciprocal commitments from victimizers, which creates an asymmetry that can be difficult to manage on the way to recovery. To support the work of victim-survivors, congregations must provide a place of safety, a commitment of fidelity to victims and their stories, and a life together that testifies to God's promises that all things will be made new.

A CANOPY OF PROMISES

Imagine an expansive and spacious canopy protecting people from the heat of the sun or the rain and creating a welcoming space. The breezes of the Holy Spirit buoy the canopy upward. Within its hospitable shelter the congregation of God's people gathers for worship, study, and fellowship. The canopy is supported by six strong pillars, each representing an important theological promise that God continues to fulfill across the span of human generations. These promises center the congregation's beliefs and practices, and orient its theological imagination.

This canopy provides a safe theological and therapeutic place for victim-survivors who are finding a path of recovery from the abuse they have experienced. Under its shade, the congregation surrounds these dear ones with hope by celebrating the promises that anchor its life together. Worship leaders and pastors guide the congregation to deeper and richer understandings of God's character tempered by the realities of violence in their midst and in the world. They will not fear if its most cherished theological beliefs are tested, refined, and imaginatively revised as they are set against the painful realities of trauma and the slow emergence of scarred but new life for survivors. Visual art, music, dance, and drama open avenues for feeling God's presence and grace where words alone would fail to reach. Beauty revealing a moment of wholeness and peace beyond the ugliness of abuse gives rise to contemplation and awe.

The following promises can anchor a congregation's response to victims-survivors of abuse.

God's presence in all time and in this time

taking responsibility for the abuse."—Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*, 145.

Scripture bears witness to Israel's and the church's experience of God's presence within the spaciousness of time. God is an ever-present help (Ps. 90). We trust God's power to rescue us in the present because of God's faithfulness in the past (Ps. 27, one among many other passages). Jesus promises to be with us until the end of the age (Mt. 28:20). In God we live, move, and have our being. God's Spirit is in us, through us, and around us, working through creation, the church, and the world.

And yet . . . God's presence is not always tangible or recognizable. In the midst of abuse, women, men, and children have felt God's profound absence. God did not or has not stopped the abuse. In the midst of a traumatic episode, victims lose their capacities to feel or trust God's presence with them. They wonder, "Why has God abandoned me?"

The theologically imaginative congregation will hold in tension the promise of God's presence and the real experiences of God's absence in the midst of intense pain, suffering, injustice, and anguish. In its corporate worship the congregation will wrestle with the story of Job, with Jesus' sense of abandonment on the cross, with Psalms 22 and 88. These texts, in particular, will temper and test what it means to say that God is present with us. As a result the congregation will have a wiser understanding of God's nature, one perhaps closer to the experience of abused victims.

Our creation in God's image and being named Beloved

At the center of our human nature is the promise that we are created in God's image (Gen. 1). We reflect God's glory, grace, and love. We are adopted as God's children by the Holy Spirit through Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:12-17). We are God's beloved (1 Jn.). Through no merit of our own, we are beings of dignity and worth, integrity, and holiness. We cannot lose this basic identity.

And yet . . . At the core of their being, victims of abuse have experienced violation of this basic human nature. Through no fault of their own trauma has sown the seeds of shame, guilt, doubt, and fear. The fundamental integration of body, mind, heart, and spirit has been shattered. Their capacity to love themselves, God, and neighbor is gravely diminished.

The congregation's theological imagination must stay centered on the promise that we are beloved of God and that our basic identity as human beings emerges from God's image in us. Claiming the promise of God's image and our status as beloved children means there is a center that responds to what is good and holy. Our capacity for change springs from

this energizing center of love. Our worth to God is not measured by the shame felt for sin committed against us or by the guilt we feel for sin committed. How the congregation imagines and acts on our beloved nature as human beings, beloved and sinful, will be good news to all who have been abused and to those who have victimized others.

God's grace as the foundation of reconciliation

Human freewill ensures that sin—the rupture of relationship with God, other human beings, ourselves, and creation—is inevitable. We strive and fail to be the controlling center of all things for many complex reasons. God understands the sinful consequences of our shortsighted acts and egocentric free will. Through grace, that mysterious power of freedom and renewal, God offers us the means for reestablishing our broken relationships with others and within ourselves.

And yet . . . Victims of abuse need God's grace active in their lives to seek justice for the sins perpetrated upon them. They will have their share of broken relationships requiring God's grace to repair, but in the context of abuse, they need God's grace for the courage to pursue justice in their situation. God's grace confirms victims' identity as beloved children of precious worth, replacing shame or guilt with dignity and honor. As victims reclaim their self-worth and personal agency, they can begin seeking accountability and justice from their victimizers.

The congregation will explore imaginatively the many-faceted dimensions of grace as gift. Often preaching and prayer give the impression that grace is inert, a thing, rather than an energy released for many purposes including mending the deep relational wounds that sin has created. Grace generates courage and action for setting misdeeds right. This gift makes us bold to risk the possibilities and the long work of reconciliation for victims and victimizers.

New life, not suffering, triumphs

Jesus, having passed through torture, death, and hell rose to new life and a new way of being in the world. The resurrection did not restore him to his former appearance (otherwise he would not have passed unrecognized by so many who knew him), but he was still recognizable as God's beloved son and living Christ. Through baptism Christians share in Christ's new life, born and reborn into the possibilities of redemption for themselves and for the world. With new life, we rise to opportunities for setting right what has gone wrong in our lives and for choosing what makes for righteousness, justice, and love.

And yet . . . This is a complicated promise for victim-survivors. By focusing more on Jesus' suffering and death than on the power of his resurrection, the church has made it appear that suffering is justified, maybe even required, for the promise of new life to be fulfilled. In devious ways, an over-focus on suffering can seem to sanction abuse, often closing options for victims to seek safety or justice. Many women have been counseled to remain in abusive relationships as a sign of their fidelity to their children or their partner. The suffering they experience merits the distinction of being a "good" wife or mother. Children are frequently threatened with more abuse if they tell anyone what they have suffered. "Good" children keep silent. Abuse does not happen in "good" families. In such circumstances physical or sexual suffering can appear to have its own rewards, but not ones that lead to new life.

Congregations must work imaginatively with this promise of new life, which triumphs over suffering. In churches that are faithful to the promise of new life preachers and teachers will not valorize or justify suffering for its own sake. Congregational ministries will address the conditions of needless suffering in their communities. Mennonites, in particular, will do more reflection on the place of suffering in its theological heritage of martyrdom, making clearer distinctions between meaning that can emerge from suffering and the merits of being a "good" Christian that often are attributed to suffering. Imaginative congregations will live the promise of new life with tenacity without denying that suffering exists in this broken world. New life is not a restoration of a past life, but an opening to the future and the promise of shalom.

Freedom for fearless truth-telling

The prophetic traditions of the Old Testament bear witness to the God-ordained necessity for telling truth. Whether they want to or not, prophets reflect back to God's people the real values implicit in their actions, their true desires and the distorted loves of their hearts. The truth is almost always inconvenient; it demands reflection and normally some kind of change. Keeping secrets and practicing denial have detrimental consequences for communities. What has been done in secret will eventually come to light with great cost to the values of trust, integrity, beauty, and love. The truth does set us free, though it might not seem so at the moment of its appearance.

And yet . . . Victims of abuse cannot trust that the truth that they tell will be heard or will lead to restorative justice. Their experiences are

routinely suppressed, denied, or trivialized. When told, their stories upset power relationships and create instability in families or communities. Telling-truth usually yields shame or guilt for someone.

The practices of confession, repentance, justice-making, and reconciliation find their grounding in the fearless freedom of telling-truth. Discerning when “good people” are being served by the convenience of partial truths, insidiously small lies, and self-serving evasions requires painstaking patience and humility. Here the congregation’s prayer needs deep and wide imagination to hold the beloved nature of all who are helped and hurt by revelations of truth, to trust the power of truth to unbind what is bound, and to rest in the grace and mercy of God to release energy for the difficult work that telling-truth requires.

Persistent hope: the promise of shalom

Redemption, salvation, love, justice, peace, righteousness, holiness, freedom, joy, equality, wholeness—Shalom. This one word draws together all the biblical longing for a place in the full presence of God where our struggles as human beings in relation to one another, with creation, and with God are laid to rest. All our tears will be wiped away; our joy will be complete. All will be well.

This place—this kingdom of heaven, this reign of God—present but not yet, is the hope that orients Christian theological imagination. On occasion we can taste and feel it now; at times we can sense it breaking into our awareness. It is a magnificent and wondrous hope.

And yet . . . Wholeness, peace, justice, and even love are often elusive dreams for victims of abuse. At times the most persistent hope will be simply to escape more pain and to survive. Fears of past and present violence often haunt the daily lives of victims, disrupting relationships and creating chaos as they attempt to care for themselves and for those they love. Telling victims to “get over” the effects of abuse is useless and cruel, and may trigger a traumatic reaction.⁷

The congregation’s theological imagination must be resilient in holding the persistent hope of shalom while participating in the painstaking work of recovery from abuse. Its hope cannot cover up the

7. Carolyn Holderread Heggen cites the experience of one woman who experienced a trauma reaction after an encounter with her pastor. “When my pastor learned that the abuse had ended twenty-seven years ago, he said, ‘Only a bitter, self-pitying woman would even remember these things after all those years.’ The pastor’s response caused this woman to feel even more self-hatred and self-condemnation. She left the pastor’s office with an overwhelming but familiar sense that she was guilty and evil. She attempted suicide that evening.” —Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*, 123.

hell that many victims live in daily. Relationships with victim-survivors are faithful to the extent that our patience and hope of their healing is as fervent as our hope in the fulfillment of God's reign.

Other biblical and theological themes will also anchor the canopy under which the congregation lives out the promises of God as it faces the reality of abuse. However, these six may be the most significant for supporting practices that can help victim-survivors find a path oriented toward healing and new life.

PRACTICES ON THE EMERGING PATH OF SHALOM

In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Lewis Herman lays out five stages or markers on the path of recovery from physical or sexual abuse:⁸ 1) establishing a relationship of trust; 2) living in safe environments; 3) remembering and mourning; 4) reconnecting with others; and 5) finding commonality with others who have been abused.⁹ Here three large movements reframe Herman's stages: 1) recognition and self-care (the abused as victims); 2) remembering and mourning (the abused as emerging survivors); and 3) reconnecting, integrating, releasing, and reconciling (the abused as survivors).¹⁰

There are no quick fixes for the damage caused by abuse. There is no map that charts the way to healing, recovery, or reconciliation. Healing

8. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, vii-viii.

9. According to Arnon Bentovim, work with male victimizers begins with validation of their experiences and not criticism; victimizers must feel safe within the therapeutic relationship. The recovery process includes 1) defining the cycles of abuse the victimizer has perpetrated; 2) defining the victimizer's attitude toward children and women; 3) understanding the victim's responses; and 4) looking at their own victimization. Because victimizers construct their understanding of abuse from their experiences of powerlessness, work with the victimizer's experience of being abused comes *after* examination of their abusing behavior. — *Trauma-Organized Systems: Physical and Sexual Abuse in Families*, rev. ed. (London: Karmac Books, 1995), 116, 111.

10. No standard way of naming the different seasons in the recovery process has emerged in the literature. Phyllis A. Willerscheidt uses Kubler-Ross's stages of grief (anger, denial, depression, bargaining, and acceptance) to name a victim's movement toward healing. — "Healing for Victims" in *Restoring the Soul of the Church*, 26. Marie Fortune writes of victims, survivors, and thrivers. — "Foreword" to *Victim to Survivor: Women Recovering from Clergy Sexual Abuse*, ed. Nancy Werking Poling (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1999), x. In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman speaks of the progress toward healing in terms of therapeutic tasks. I have chosen the terms "victim," "emerging survivor," and "survivor" to remind those who have not suffered abuse that each season in the process has different tasks and that the journey toward healing is long.

requires lots of time.¹¹ The process is more circuitous than linear. Each victim-survivor's path will emerge in its own way and draw on the person's unique combination of gifts, graces, challenges, and trials. Traumatic events "challenge an ordinary person to become a theologian, a philosopher, and a jurist."¹²

In North America, the dominant culture focuses attention first on abused individuals in the recovery process; the communities in which victims live are usually a secondary consideration. However, many abuse victims in North America are embedded in social and cultural networks that understand recovery to be first in relationship to their community; the specific needs of individual victims are secondary. Victim-survivors must negotiate the values of their home cultures, which have important understandings and practices to aid healing or to complicate the recovery process.¹³

Much recovery work will be done by a small group of companions, people with wisdom who will listen carefully for what victim-survivors say they need and what they are ready to address. These companions must be truthful about their motivations for supporting the recovery work of victim-survivors. They cannot enter this process with the illusion that they can save the abuse victim. If companions have experienced abuse, they will discern prayerfully whether their own recovery is complete enough to engage this ministry of accompaniment. Companions will be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, continually discerning how God's Spirit is leading the victim-survivor and themselves along a path of recovery.

11. Theologically, we can hold the possibility of God's miraculous intervention in healing the deep wounds caused by abuse, but in reality healing is a slow process, and no less miraculous. Our view of miracles tends to focus on single individuals with infirmities and less on the other people who compose the network of the victim's social world: parents, siblings, spouses, children, relatives, and friends. The Gospel writers never give follow-ups to the miracle stories they narrated. What happened when the healed person went home? What did Bartimaeus do without a trade? Or the man born blind who now needed people differently? Or the demoniac who could now be trusted to behave? Or the hemorrhaging woman who was no longer set apart from her community? We have no idea how their healing "played back home." Perhaps the people in the stories also took the rest of their lives to recover fully.

12. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 178.

13. Kathleen Nader, et al. *Honoring Differences: Cultural Issues in the Treatment of Trauma and Loss* (Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), xviii, 2, 277.

PRACTICES MARKING THE PATH

Testimony

All along a path to healing, victim-survivors will testify to their experiences in different forms – from the raw and overwhelming terror of the victim’s body memory to the organized and coherent narrative of survivors. Their testimonies may be in spoken or written words. Some stories, too deep for words, will be sung, played, danced, painted, drawn, or captured in sculpture. All victims or survivors have the right to assume that their testimonies will be taken seriously and not thought to be some idle tale.

Bearing Witness

People who accompany victim-survivors on the healing path bear witness without judgment to the disturbing and potentially dangerous reality of abuse. They will respect that victim-survivors have experienced something disturbing that requires their attention.¹⁴ Through their presence they embody the steadfast presence of God. Their agency on behalf of beloved victims stands as a sign of God’s grace already active in the pursuit of safety, understanding, and healing. Witnesses practice patient wisdom when they offer words of care and affirmation, or give gestures of support. Some victims will be ready to participate in a service of anointing for strength and a sense of solidarity. Other victims will find the physical closeness of this rite upsetting and will not be able to manage their fear of physical contact. They may most appreciate a safe space of silent or spoken prayer.

Lament

Lament is a different mood of testimony. Naming and mourning the losses of self and community wrecked by abuse is essential for healing at

14. Working with memories of abuse, whether in the immediate or in the distant past, is fraught with challenges. Studies have shown that human memory cannot record “facts” that will establish “the truth” as reliably as was once theorized. Findings from these studies have opened a number of quandaries for the judicial system related to the nature of testimony. The “facts” of a single incident or multiple incidences of abuse may not be remembered with absolute accuracy. See Laura Beil, “The certainty of memory has its day in court,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/health/the-certainty-of-memory-has-its-day-in-court.html?pagewanted=all_r=0 (accessed Oct. 4, 2014) and “Emotion Affects Memory’s Reliability,” National Science Foundation, June 28, 2010, www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cutu_id=117140 (accessed Oct. 4, 2014). But determining whether every detail of victims’ stories is true presents distractions from the central issue. The meaning created by instances of abuse is woven into the fabric of victims’ consciousness. It is the meaning associated with such events that must be addressed and, often slowly, reoriented.

the deep intersections of body, mind, heart, and soul. The intensity of lament will vary along the emerging path; sadness will likely persist long into the future. Lament also expresses the sense of surrender not to despair, hopelessness, or fear of more abuse, but to the recognition that emerging victims have limited power to heal or rescue themselves. This can be the moment when a spark of trust begins to burn. Emerging survivors may be at more ease with companions who are helping them navigate an unknown path.

Companions with the emerging survivors will honor the deep emotional energy that lament unleashes. They will create safe and bounded space in which the deep cries of anguish, despair, and grief can find voice. They too will grieve for all that has been lost. The book of Lamentations and various psalms of lament can provide language for crying to God, who may seem very far away. By their presence, the companions witness on God's behalf the emerging survivors' pain and demonstrate that God's love is not shattered by the beloved's anger. They testify to the promise of justice in the face of suffering and the reality of grace that seeks justice.

Confession

The practice of confession must be undertaken with great judiciousness. Emerging survivors should not confess to "sins" that relieve victimizers of their responsibility for abuse or take blame for the abuse that occurred. Emerging survivors will need to examine their relationships with family members, friends, and themselves that have been damaged as a result of their reactions to trauma. As they gain control of their lives, telling the truth about the harm they have caused others leads emerging survivors to freedom and a greater sense of personal control.

Emerging survivors may also acknowledge that their relationship with God is uncertain or perhaps even dead. Sometimes they can no longer pray. They might not be able to trust the God who seemed absent or powerless to stop the abuse they endured. They can no longer believe the simplistic claims that the church often makes about God. This confession of no faith can come at a deep cost for the emerging survivors in their relationships with family members or to their congregations.

Companions will help victim-survivors clarify their understanding of "sin," and they will not shy away from the difficult theological questions about sin that abuse raises. The book of Job can provide an important tutorial for this exploration. Gaining a deeper understanding of sin can lead the emerging survivor to honestly confess the "sin" that is theirs.

Companions will extend assurance of God's gracious forgiveness, even if the emerging survivors are not in an emotional or theological place to accept this promise. They can pray for emerging survivors if they cannot pray for themselves, choosing words that will orient them toward healing and do no emotional harm.

Repentance

The practice of repentance also requires careful discernment. Trauma drives relational patterns that can have corrosive effects on relationships with people that emerging survivors hold dear. They are now able to name and evaluate compassionately their behaviors that do not serve reconciliation. Repentance reestablishes emerging survivors' sense of agency; they make choices and create plans that will make a difference with their families and friends, congregations, and communities.

Companions will bear witness to and rejoice with all testimonies recounting improved social relationships and possibly restored connection to God. They can offer assurances of God's love and grace in the midst of relationships that are not yet reconciled. Emerging survivors might welcome the church's practice of anointing as a tangible sign of God's strength and courage working in them as they commit to the behavioral changes that repentance entails.

Releasing/Forgiving

Many survivors face enormous pressure to "forgive" those who abused them regardless of whether the victimizers have taken appropriate responsibility for their misconduct. Forgiveness may not be the most helpful word for this context. It carries too many demands to "make nice" and operates with great impatience to "move on with life."¹⁵ In English "to release" and "to forgive" share the same semantic domain, rooted in the Greek ἀφίημι.¹⁶ Releasing the actions of the victimizer is one dimension on the path to healing. Survivors may also release guilt; anger; self-denigration; engrained relational patterns rooted in fear or panic; old understandings of God; and family or church relationships. Survivors are not dependent upon victimizers' readiness to confess to or

15. "Forgiveness is not about condoning or forgetting the transgression and may or may not involve some form of reconciliation. . . . Nor may forgiveness be possible until well down the road for people who have experienced severe trauma."—David Briggs, "Researchers tell faith communities to let trauma survivors forgive in their own time," *The Christian Century*, Sept. 17, 2014, 18.

16. Other English words sharing in this domain include "let go," "send away," "relinquish," and "discharge."

repent of their abusive behavior; they need not remain stuck in their past memories or pain. In releasing the power of abuse that hangs over them, survivors harness their own agency for healing, standing now in opposition to the ways that abuse stripped them of their sense of self without consent.

The practices of lament, confession, and repentance carry forms of release within them. But naming the thoughts, feelings, and actions that no longer control survivors is one of the most powerful testimonies that companions will witness. New life is triumphing over suffering. Companions will bless survivors' efforts to live in the freedom of release. If they have not been previously baptized, survivors might mark this season of new life by taking on a Christian baptismal identity. Through the rite of baptism, celebrated in the midst of the congregation, they claim their identity as God's beloved children, empowered by God's Spirit, released from sin, risen to new life, and joined with the community of God's people. Those Christians who have already been baptized might reclaim restored identity through a form of baptismal renewal. In receiving or renewing their baptism, survivors testify to the presence of God's Spirit upholding them throughout the process of recovery. Around common tables, or at the Lord's Supper, they will bear witness to the presence of shalom breaking into all of their lives. Sharing food that strengthens the body testifies to God's sustaining grace in the difficult work of releasing what has been destructive.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation between survivors and their victimizers is a most desired outcome for the healing process. Indeed, entirely new relationships between survivors and their victimizers characterized by safety, respect, honesty, justice, and compassion would serve as a joyous consequence of recovery work. But the transformation of abusive relationships may be impossible to achieve because the victimizer may be unknown (as in the case of assault), may be dead, or may resist acknowledging any wrongdoing. The deep work of emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing consumes time and energy. It cannot be rushed; it unfolds in waves within the larger frame of God's time. Having released the need for vengeance, the most that many survivors may be able to extend to their victimizers is the wish for their well-being. Survivors need not hold affection, care, or desire to ever see their

victimizers again. And yet, this wish for well-being, an expression of compassion, can still work for good in their lives.¹⁷

Companions keep their hope oriented toward reconciliation, but they testify to the reality that not all relationships can be mended in their lifetime. Their theological imaginations celebrate the joy of reunion and the sadness of rupture as signs of human holiness and human brokenness. They pray for opportunities to further the work of reconciliation and seek reasonable ways that they might help reweave what has been torn apart. They host frequent meals celebrating the sustained hope in the promise of shalom. Survivors may wish to be anointed frequently for the gifts of courage, patience, and discernment in what might yet reconcile relationships that remain estranged.

Practicing Persistent Hope

The face of hope changes often along the path of healing. In the early stages victims simply hope that the abuse and its attendant trauma will stop. Hope in the midst of lament and mourning seems elusive. Yet when emerging survivors can pass through that shadow of death, the hope for new life begins to take shape. Survivors hope that the power of past abuse over their lives will continue to diminish and that changes in their own behavior may become habits. They hope for reconciliation with their families, communities, and possibly their victimizers. Their abuse narratives now have meaning within the larger context of their lives, and, hopefully, within God's larger story of reconciliation. They may be eager to share what they have learned with other people or become witnesses to the courageous work being undertaken by victims and emerging survivors. The hope of shalom gives a new orientation for their lives, free from undue fear.

Companions will be the faces of hope for the victim-survivors along their paths. They will keep their eyes on the ultimate hope of shalom, but never lose sight of the needs of the ones they are accompanying. Prayer will be the primary and constant practice of hope, as it is for all of us who wait for the fullness of God's reign to come "on earth as it is in heaven." Their testimonies of thanksgiving will bear witness to the

17. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 153-154. Perhaps the survivors' capacity to wish for their victimizers' well-being may provide a glimpse of what it may mean to love our enemies. We do not have to like our enemies or have affection for them to be able to pray for them, to do them no harm, or to wish for their well-being. Love and care may grow into deeper compassion over time, but initially we put away the desire to pursue vengeance or for anyone else to do harm on our behalf.

realities of fidelity, grace, justice-making, and love demonstrated in the lives of survivors at every point along their long path to recovery.

THE CANOPY AND THE PATH

Sheltered by a canopy of promises, victim-survivors and their companions find a path to healing and new life. The journey may take a lifetime, but the ultimate orienting point for their courageous work is the vision of shalom. Moments of ugliness and beauty, despair and wonder, and hopelessness and joy will abound. But in the persistent presence of patient and loving companions, survivors can find freedom from the devastating power of abuse to destroy the soul. And when their new lives radiate the promise of shalom, we will all bear witness to the power of God's love and grace to set right what has been made so deeply wrong.

Naming the Pain, Seeking the Light: The Mennonite Church's Response to Sexual Abuse

LINDA GEHMAN PEACHEY*

Abstract: This article provides an overview of how Mennonites have addressed sexual violence in our homes and communities since the 1970's. It describes work done through Mennonite Central Committee's Women Concerns Program, as well as efforts by denominational media and staff to report on this issue and develop policies and procedures to deal with ministerial misconduct. It also references more recent initiatives to respond to sexual violence and highlights ongoing challenges that require continued work, especially to address ways in which sexualized violence maintains systems of domination across gender, race, and class.

One amazing aspect of the Bible is its profound honesty about sin, including sexualized violence. The rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13) is one of the most poignant and disturbing examples. Another is David's violation of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), which is often presented as a story about adultery; the reality is that David misused his power as king to take what he wanted from Bathsheba and then tried to cover it up by having her husband killed.¹

Although distressing, these stories help us acknowledge that sexualized violence is not new but has long been part of the human story. These stories can also help us recognize and own the sexualized violence that exists in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ homes and churches. According to the 2006 Church Member Profile, 21 percent of women and 5.6 percent of men in Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) reported having experienced "sexual abuse or violation."² Among

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1. 2 Samuel 11.

2. "Analysis of Sexual Abuse among Mennonites," June 16, 2009, Table 2. This study was conducted by the Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups at Elizabethtown College (Pa.) and included responses from a representative sample of 2,216 Mennonite Church USA members, 319 MC USA credentialed ministers, and 685 Brethren in Christ members. The study included one question on sexual violation as part of a much larger questionnaire. The analysis of this data was done by Conrad L. Kanagy and paid for by the M.C.C. U.S. Women's Advocacy Program. A smaller study was conducted in 1991 by Isaac Block, then a professor at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg, Man. Using a random sample of 187 adults from Winnipeg Mennonite church directories, he found that 25 percent of females and 7 percent of males reported experiences of sexual abuse.—"Winnipeg Mennos experience domestic abuse, study says," *The Mennonite*, June 11, 1991, 253.

Brethren in Christ (BIC) members, the results were even higher—29.2 percent for women and 10 percent for men.³ Most of the abuse or violations occurred when the individuals were children or teenagers but in MC USA 4.2 percent of women and 13 percent of female pastors experienced sexualized violence as an adult.⁴

One woman described her experience this way:

I was groomed to accept verbal, physical and sexual abuse over a long period of time. So when the rape happened at age 12 by my brother it was just a slight alteration from the normal pattern. . . . Over the course of my young life I learned to accept inappropriate sexual touching from my grandfather, father and brothers. . . .⁵

Another wrote:

. . . I was victimized by a “man of God,” an ordained minister and college professor. I will call him Cain. Cain called me “friend,” his “special friend,” the one he’d searched for all his life. I was unspeakably flattered to be his “chosen.” At his suggestion, we made a life-long “friendship covenant.”

Very quickly—too quickly—he became my mentor, counselor, literary agent and, in his words, “supporting cast.” And I? Cain said I was his “grace-giver,” “wounded healer,” “true friend” and “Christ.”

Cain said he hoped he wasn’t crowding me. He also said he couldn’t live without me, and that once in, there was no way out of the friendship. After the sexual violations, no, not only after—before and during too—he often alluded to suicide. “Suicide threats should be taken seriously especially if the person has a plan.” I read that in the library one hot Saturday afternoon, the day after Cain threatened to use a knife in my kitchen when I refused his advances. Yes, Cain was specific: the bridge, the rafters in his bedroom, a knife. . . .

For a long time after terminating with Cain, I felt cursed. . . . He forecast what disclosure would bring: gloom, silence, marriage breakdown, friendlessness. . . . His grip tortured. Sharing my story is a way of disempowering the curses. Only a few remain.⁶

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Excerpted from “Surviving my childhood – Katherine’s Story,” posted March 2008 on the former Mennonite Central Committee website on abuse response and prevention.

6. Excerpted from “Recovering from Soul Rape,” *MCC Women’s Concerns Report*, No. 112, “Pastoral and professional misconduct,” Jan.-Feb., 1994, 3-4.

It has taken many years for the church to hear these stories and understand the depth of pain represented by these numbers. How did this begin? What gave these people the courage to finally tell of their experience and to ask for help in seeking the light? And what have we learned over the past few decades?

BEGINNING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SEXUAL ABUSE

One of the first steps on this journey to address sexual abuse in the church took place in 1971 when the Mennonite Central Committee (M.C.C.) Peace Section added several women representatives to its board.⁷ Two years later, these women urged the Peace Section to include women's interests as part of its peace agenda. According to its March 1973 minutes, the Peace Section accepted this challenge and appointed "a subcommittee of the women members of the Section along with Luann Habegger and with Ted Koontz as staff persons to pursue the suggested goals."⁸ One of the first projects was a task force newsletter to provide new opportunities and tools for organizing, networking, education, and advocacy.⁹ Slowly, Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women began to speak more frankly and strongly about their experiences of sexual abuse at home and in their congregations and communities. In the spring of 1976, the M.C.C. *Women's Concerns Report* newsletter included an article on rape, and in September 1977 it devoted an entire issue to this reality. In 1978 and 1979, two issues of the newsletter focused on family violence.¹⁰

7. The Peace Section of the Mennonite Central Committee was established in 1942. It was composed of delegated representatives of the peace committees of the constituent conferences and served as an agency for counseling on conscription and the draft, representation to government, study and writing on the peace position, and peace education in constituent congregations.—Harold S. Bender and Urbane Peachey, "Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite_Central_Committee_Peace_Section&oldid=121236.

8. M.C.C. Peace Section Minutes, March 1973.

9. This newsletter became the M.C.C. *Women's Concerns Report*. Initially issued every few months, it became a bi-monthly publication in 1980, with a total of 176 issues published by the end of 2004, when M.C.C. discontinued the publication.—"Women's Concerns Report issues," *Women's Concerns Report*, No. 176, "Celebrating Report," Nov.-Dec., 2004, 20-22.

10. The March-April 1976 issue of *Women's Concerns Report* addressed the "total woman" phenomenon, women's experiences in the working world, and the politics of rape. The Dec. 1978 and Jan. 1979 issues were entitled "Family Violence, Part 1" and "Family Violence, Part 2," respectively.

The 1980's prompted further examination of these topics, with the *Women's Concerns Report* publishing an issue on "Women, pornography and violence" (Jan.-Feb. 1986), an issue on "Wife Abuse" (Sept.-Oct. 1987), one on "Incest" (March-April 1989), and one on "Sex Tourism and Prostitution" (Sept.-Oct. 1989).

As Muriel Thiessen Stackley, then coordinator of the Newton (Kan.) Area Peace Center and previous editor of *Women's Concerns Report* and *The Mennonite*, reflected in 1993, these newsletters:

brought a regular dose of medicine to the blind spots, often well-intentioned, of our patriarchal society. It has offered a forum for and about women. It has, I believe, been a catalyst in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ circles. It has broadened our awareness, helped define our theology, educated us, offered practical information, described relationships, evoked tears of empathy, enlivened our language, defined our careers and affirmed the leadership of women—all this by telling women's stories.¹¹

M.C.C. staff went on to compile and publish the *Purple Packet: Wife Abuse* in 1987, the *Broken Boundaries: Child Sexual Abuse* packet in 1989, and the *Crossing the Boundary: Sexual Abuse by Professionals* packet in 1991. These packets included stories, definitions and analysis of abuse, biblical and theological reflections, suggestions for response and prevention, and additional resources. Thousands of these packets went to individuals and congregations across the church.¹²

Another significant development was a series of public meetings organized by M.C.C. and local partners that began to openly name and address violence against women. For example, on November 2-3, 1990, the West Coast M.C.C., the M.C.C. Domestic Violence Task Force, and the M.C.C. Committee on Women's Concerns sponsored a conference called "Shedding Light on Darkness: A Mennonite and Brethren in Christ response to violence and sexual abuse in the family." Held in Upland, California, the gathering drew about 200 participants from nineteen states and five Canadian provinces.¹³

11. "The Report: Helping Us 'Rethink,'" *Women's Concerns Report*, No. 109, "CWC Turns 20," July-Aug., 1993, 10.

12. M.C.C. had printed 9,500 copies of the *Purple Packet*, 7,000 copies of *Broken Boundaries*, and 6,000 copies of the *Crossing the Boundary* packet to date.—"CWC turns 20," *Women's Concerns Report*, No. 109, July-Aug., 1993, 7-8.

13. Kathy Heinrichs Wiest, M.C.C. News Service article, Nov. 16, 1990, 1, in M.C.C. files. Also reported by Don Ratzlaff (editor of the *Christian Leader*) in an article for Meetinghouse.—"Domestic Violence in our Midst," *The Mennonite*, Dec. 25, 1990, 555-557.

One important outgrowth of the conference was the formation of a confidential Network of Adult Survivors of Abuse.¹⁴ Facilitated initially by the M.C.C. Domestic Violence Task Force, the network provided mailings, information, and opportunities for survivors to connect with others in their region. Those who had suffered sexual violence deeply appreciated the mutual support provided by the network; indeed, for some, it became their only connection to the church.¹⁵

On October 4-5, 1991, the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (A.M.B.S.)¹⁶ hosted another powerful conference, called "Peace Theology and Violence against Women." Sponsored by the A.M.B.S. Women's Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Institute of Mennonite Studies (I.M.S.) and the Peace Studies Program, the conference included presentations on a range of topics related to violence against women.¹⁷ Importantly, several women who had been victimized by John Howard Yoder found one another at the conference, shared their stories, and decided they would organize and ask church leaders to intervene to stop the abuse.¹⁸

At least five additional church conferences took place in 1992 and 1994, followed by two in Spanish in 2001 and 2002.¹⁹ The 1992 conference, "Facing Family Abuse: From Darkness to Light," held in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, generated so much interest that organizers had to cap registration seven weeks before the event at 250 participants. While the conference focused primarily on lament and the search for

14. Wiest, M.C.C. News Service article, Nov. 16, 1990, 2 and Ratzlaff, "Domestic Violence," 557.

15. From correspondence of the author with members of this network, during her work as Women's Advocacy director, 2004-2011.

16. Now renamed "Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary."

17. Papers and responses from this consultation were printed as *Peace Theology and Violence against Women*, ed. Elizabeth G. Yoder (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1992). The presentations included: Mary H. Schertz, "Creating Justice in the Space Around Us"; Gayle Gerber Koontz, "Redemptive Resistance to Violation of Women"; Ruth E. Krall, "Christian Ideology, Rape and Women's Posttrauma Journeys to Healing"; Carol Penner, "Content to Suffer: An Exploration of Mennonite Theology from the Context of Violence Against Women"; and a case study on "Domestic Abuse" by Isaac I. Block.

18. From author's private conversation with one of these victims.

19. Other conferences included: "A Time for Healing" in Winnipeg, Man., March 13-14, 1992; "Breaking Silence, Bringing Hope," Kidron, Ohio, March 20-21, 1992; "Shedding Light on Darkness," 1992, Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church, B.C.; "Hope for the Journey," Hillsboro, Kan., April 22-23, 1994; and a symposium in Harleysville, Pa., Oct. 14-16, 1994. The one in Spanish addressed family violence, and was held May 2001 in Akron, Pa., followed by one in 2002 in San Antonio, Texas. Carolyn Holderread Heggen and Ruth Krall were often the featured speakers at these events.

healing, "some anger did appear on the 'wailing wall' where participants wrote out their frustration and pain and named names."²⁰

GROWING AWARENESS IN THE MENNONITE MEDIA

During the 1990s more mainstream Mennonite media began addressing these issues as well. The index to *The Mennonite*, for example, has no "abuse" heading in 1990 but by 1992 lists fourteen articles under this heading, nineteen in 1993, eight in 1994, eleven in 1995, and one in 1996. In fact, *The Mennonite* devoted its April 27, 1993, issue to this theme, under the title "Healing the Wounds of Abuse."²¹ Two years later the editors offered the issue "The Church, a Place for Healing," which included many suggestions for support, prevention, and additional resources.²²

One of the first articles on the subject of sexual abuse in the *Gospel Herald* was Martha Smith Good's "The Rape of Tamar," (May 15, 1990). Eighteen months later, J. Lorne Peachey reported in his Sept. 29, 1992, editorial, "Seven Months of Tough Lessons," that *Gospel Herald* had printed sixty pages of "news stories, features and many letters" dealing with sexual abuse and misconduct since the end of February that year. Sadly, many of these news stories disclosed information about church leaders who had committed sexual violations.

One of the first reports came in February 1992 when conference leaders in Ontario, Canada, suspended the credentials of Urie A. Bender. Perceiving the conference announcement as inadequate, a group of concerned women wrote their own statement, which was titled "Women charge Mennonite leader with sexual misconduct."²³ A few weeks later, a *Mennonite Weekly Review* headline reported that "Bethel Withdraws Invitation for Theologian to Speak, Sexual Misconduct Alleged"; the theologian was John Howard Yoder.²⁴ In the months and years that

20. Margaret Loewen Reimer (for Meetinghouse), "Church Ignores Abuse, Survivors say at Meeting," *Gospel Herald*, Feb. 18, 1992, 9.

21. Articles included "Healing the Wounds of Abuse" by anonymous; "What is incest? What is sexual abuse?" and "Bad theology leads to bad behavior" by Aiden Schlichting Enns (acting western regional editor for *Mennonite Reporter*); "Psalm of Lament" by Ruth Lapp Guengerich; and "Men who abuse often victims themselves."

22. Articles in the May 9, 1995, issue included "To be a place of healing" and "We need more than therapy" by Gordon Houser (editor of *The Mennonite*); "Healing the sin in our midst" by anonymous; "Don't forgive and forget" by Isaac Block (professor at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg, Man.); and "Suggestions for showing support," "How the church can help prevent abuse," and "Resources for moving toward healing from sexual abuse."

23. *The Mennonite*, Feb. 25, 1992, 84-86. This ran alongside the "Statement of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (M.C.E.C.) Leadership Committee regarding Urie Bender."

24. Paul Schrag, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 12, 1992, 3. The July 16, 1992, M.W.R. issue carried the story, "Credentials of Theologian Suspended for Misconduct," based on

followed, additional reports surfaced, including accusations against Conrad Wetzel (pastor in Central District and Illinois Conference),²⁵ James L. Dunn (Western District Conference moderator and pastor),²⁶ John Sommer (missionary in Japan),²⁷ Peter Ediger (pastor of Arvada Mennonite Church),²⁸ Henry Reimer (pastor in Saskatchewan),²⁹ and Hubert Brown (pastor and dean of students at Hesston College).³⁰ This is not a complete list but illustrative of reports in the church press during those years.

Several articles explained why the church press felt it necessary to publish this information, and the guidelines they were using in determining whether and how to do so. Already in April 1991, a consortium of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ editors (Meetinghouse) commissioned an article by James Coggins, then the associate editor of *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, titled "Should we report scandal in the Mennonite press?"³¹ He gave ten reasons why these reports were necessary: they warn potential victims; discourage charlatans; make it easier to offer compensation and assistance; enhance the credibility of the church press and the church; demonstrate our commitment to the truth; help us remember who we are; offer the opportunity to publicize redemption; and help us offer salvation to sinners. Also, he said, public sin should be dealt with publicly and doing so would help remove the excessive stigma attached to subjects treated as unsuitable for public discussion.

information from Prairie St. Mennonite Church, a news release from Indiana-Michigan conference, and *The Elkhart Truth*.

25. "Central District, Illinois conferences suspend minister's credentials," *The Mennonite*, June 23, 1992, 282.

26. Carla Reimer, "WDC moderator, pastor resigns, admits misconduct," *The Mennonite*, Oct. 13, 1992, 448-449. Dunn's credentials were restored about a year later, as reported in "Western District reinstates pastor after suspension," *The Mennonite*, Oct. 26, 1993, 15.

27. "Mission worker recalled for misconduct," *The Mennonite*, Jan. 12, 1993, 14.

28. "Minister's license pulled, church still in recovery," *The Mennonite*, June 22, 1993, 14. An earlier article had referenced the congregation's struggle.—Hugo Hildebrand, "Seeking healing as a congregation," *Gospel Herald*, July 9, 1991, 300. The 1993 article reported that Ediger had resigned in 1987 as a result of "sexual abuse and abuse of power toward people in the congregation" and been placed on "indefinite leave of absence from ministry" but it appears his credentials were not withdrawn until 1993.

29. Ron Rempel, "Saskatchewan minister loses his credentials," *The Mennonite*, Oct. 25, 1994, 16-17.

30. Larry Penner, "Credentials of former minister revoked," *The Mennonite*, Dec. 12, 1995, 14-15. One of the victims subsequently asked for more accountability.—Aiden Schlichting Enns, "Abuse victim speaks out," *The Mennonite*, April 23, 1996.

31. *Gospel Herald*, April 30, 1991, 6-7.

In July 1992, *Gospel Herald* published a three-column article "Guidelines for reporting sexual misconduct and other sensitive news stories," and invited feedback.³² These guidelines repeated the case for carrying such news: accountability; integrity; truth and accuracy; deterrence; and legitimation of the stories of those who have been violated. Nearly two years later, J. Lorne Peachey wrote "Why we persist," an editorial reiterating similar themes. "Perhaps," he concluded, ". . . we'll look back on the 1990's as the time when we embraced the truth rather than the darkness of coverup and denial."³³

The Mennonite press also engaged in self-examination. In 1993, *The Mennonite* published an article by Larry Cornies, "Reporting Abuse Stories: An Evaluation." From his reading of "228 clippings from four Mennonite news periodicals"—*The Mennonite*, *Gospel Herald*, *Mennonite Reporter*, and *Mennonite Weekly Review*—Cornies noted successes in the areas of balance, adherence to accepted journalistic principles, self-criticism, and reader access. Yet, several challenges remained, he concluded, specifically in seeking a deeper understanding of the context and the motivations surrounding these violations; advocacy and a "Jubilee" for women; and follow-up reporting when healing and restoration had occurred.³⁴ In an adjacent article, "Part of the Accountability Process," Joyce Smith, then a student at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of Ontario, generally affirmed how Mennonite periodicals had handled abuse stories, but called for more care in weeding out "hateful letters to the editor," and more feature articles on responding to abuse, "steps to reconciliation," and "the problems with systemic sexism and power structures."³⁵

CHURCHWIDE INITIATIVES

Some men also became active allies. In February 1992 about three dozen men from the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church participated in a consultation in Colorado to address male violence against women. As they reported, "The experiences and learnings of that weekend had a profound impact resulting in confession, repentance and renewal. . . ."³⁶ They concluded their gathering with a covenant to break the silence around abuse.³⁷

32. *Gospel Herald*, July 7, 1992, 4-5.

33. *Gospel Herald*, March 15, 1994, 16.

34. *The Mennonite*, April 27, 1993, 8-9.

35. *Ibid.*, 10.

36. From the "Background" information in the 1993 "Resolution on Male Violence against Women."—<http://home.mennonitechurch.ca/1993-maleviolence>.

37. "A covenant to break the silence," *The Mennonite*, March 10, 1992, 101.

Almost immediately, three of the men wrote a letter to the Bethel College president, John Zehr, about John Howard Yoder's upcoming appearance there as a keynote speaker. Having learned of Yoder's abuse of women, these men noted that "Many of these women first met him at conferences like this one. . . . We do not want more women abused by him."³⁸ When Bethel College subsequently withdrew Yoder's invitation to speak, the denominational press reported Yoder's abusive behavior publicly for the first time.³⁹

Another expression of this commitment to break the silence was "A Resolution on Male Violence against Women," adopted by the Mennonite Church in 1993. The General Conference Mennonite Church considered a similar statement in 1992 but made a number of changes, approving it with the title "A Resolution against Interpersonal Abuse." *The Mennonite* reported that John Braun (one of the signers of the covenant) argued that these changes departed from the resolution's original intent. The resolution had come from "a group of men who were confronted with their own violence and the complicity of violence against women. [These changes] give women equal responsibility with men. I'm ashamed that most of the change had come from men, not women."⁴⁰

Church leaders also started addressing the need for increased understanding and education about sexual transgression by church leaders. In 1992, James Lapp, then general secretary of the Mennonite Church General Board, wrote a lead article for the *Gospel Herald*, "How can church leaders avoid moral failure?"⁴¹ He noted that church leaders should be aware of their own areas of vulnerability and are responsible not to misuse the power given to them as pastors. He urged appropriate accountability structures and the need for church leaders to practice spiritual disciplines, tend their marriages well, and take practical precautions when making pastoral visits.

Also that year, Meetinghouse commissioned Nancy Heisey, then associate executive secretary for M.C.C., to write "How do we confront sexual misconduct by church leaders?"⁴² She addressed how Matthew

38. James C. Juhnke, "The decision to disinvite John Howard Yoder to speak," *The Mennonite*, June 2014, 45.

39. *Ibid.*, 46.

40. *The Mennonite*, Aug. 11, 1992, 349-350. Also Paul Schrag, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, July 30, 1992, 2.

41. *Gospel Herald*, March 10, 1992, 1-4.

42. *Gospel Herald*, Aug. 11, 1992, 1-3, 8.

18:15-20 applies in these situations and why those who have been violated may need to ask for assistance in confronting the offender. In addition, she shared a story highlighting why it is important for the wider church to know when a church leader has offended sexually. She had recommended that a friend contact a Mennonite pastor for assistance, only to learn later that he had violated several women.

Another vital resource was Carolyn Holderread Heggen's book *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*, published by Herald Press in 1993.⁴³ Heggen provided definitions, information about perpetrators and the effects of abuse on victims, and suggestions for prevention. What has made this book especially valuable is that Heggen courageously identified religious beliefs that contribute to abuse and addressed how repentance, restitution, forgiveness, and reconciliation should not be misused in these situations, but rather should lead toward true healing for those who have been victimized. She also urged congregations to foster healthy sexuality and provided worship resources that are sensitive to survivors. Those resources remain relevant still today.

Meanwhile, the congregational and ministerial leadership offices of the Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, and the Conference of Mennonites in Canada worked on guidelines for area conferences to use when issues of misconduct came to their attention. In April 1992 they adopted an initial set of "Guidelines for Discipline in Ministerial Credentialing."⁴⁴ These included instructions about who is responsible for disciplinary action, what types of charges are covered, basic guidelines and procedures to follow, actions that may be taken regarding ministerial credentials, and the process for appealing the decision (whether that appeal is mounted by the accused or by the complainant). About a year later, the offices issued a second edition of these guidelines that included more information about sexual abuse and harassment and spelled out the pastor's responsibility to maintain proper boundaries. These guidelines also included a sexual code of ethics for all ministers to sign, the proper steps for release of information in any case of misconduct, expanded victim support, an expected leave of absence for pastors accused of sexual misconduct, and an accountability group for pastors during their suspension.⁴⁵

In 1994, Mennonite Conciliation Services, M.C.C. Women's Concerns Program, Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, and the

43. This book was translated into Spanish as *Abuso Sexual: En los hogares Christianos y la Iglesia*, and published in 2002 in Colombia with M.C.C. support.

44. Mennonite Church USA archives. XIII-03-03, Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries Executive Secretary's Subject Files, c. 1971-2001, Box 4, file 1/45.

45. Carla Reimer, "What the new guidelines say," *The Mennonite*, July 13, 1993, 13.

General Conference Ministerial Leadership Office co-sponsored a training event in Elkhart, Indiana, on “Responding to Sexual Misconduct by Church Leaders.” Led by David Brubaker, a church conflict consultant, and Chilton Knudsen, an Episcopal priest of Chicago, the training encouraged church officials to start by providing support to the vulnerable party, and then to obtain an independent professional assessment of the accused and to give attention to the affected congregation, using outside resources when possible.⁴⁶

Participants at this event, including Brubaker and Knudsen, Tina Mast-Burnett (M.C.C. Women’s Concerns staff), Anne Stuckey (Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries), and John Esau (Ministerial Leadership Services, General Conference Mennonite Church) went on to create additional documents on a number of issues. These included: Guidelines for Accountability Groups; Pastoral Care of Accused Clergy; Response Groups in Dealing with Accusations of Sexual Abuse; Congregational Steps to Health Following Trauma; Stages in a Congregation’s Healing Process; and Ways to Prevent Pastoral Sexual Misconduct. These 1996 documents are still available, some with updates, on the MC USA website.⁴⁷

In 1998 the denominations began revising their policies amid concerns that the earlier guidelines did not adequately safeguard those who were accused.⁴⁸ For example, those guidelines stressed the need to act quickly and did not clearly separate the investigative tasks from providing support to the victim. Some feared that if the procedures were not perceived as fair, the process could backfire and lose credibility.

With significant input and writing from several Mennonite lawyers, a completely new document, “Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure,” was then adopted in 2000.⁴⁹ This procedure provided much

46. “Conference provides guidance on how to address clergy sexual abuse,” *Gospel Herald*, May 10, 1994, 10. See also “After abuse: steps of healing the church,” *The Mennonite*, May 24, 1994, 13.

47. See “Leadership Development: Congregation and Pastor Relationship Packets”: <http://resources.mennoniteusa.org/resource-center/resources/leadership-development-packets/sexual-misconduct/>.

48. See for example, a letter from Central District Conference Minister Lloyd Miller, May 7, 1998, to John Esau (GC Ministerial Leadership Office) and Anne Stuckey (MC Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministry), found in MC USA Archives, MBCM Ministerial Leadership, Box 1 Records 1991-2000, “Guidelines for Discipline,” 1998-2000 folder.

49. From memos exchanged between Elvin Kraybill and Anne Stuckey from June and October, 1998. — “Guidelines for Discipline, 1998-2000,” MBCM Ministerial Leadership, Box 1, Records 1991-2000, Archives of the MC USA–Goshen.

more detail about how to “make factual determinations about complaints of Ministerial Sexual Misconduct and to impose Sanctions when warranted.”⁵⁰ It is a clear step-by-step guide for conducting an investigation but by its own admission does not fully address the needs for “healing, recompense, repentance and forgiveness. . . .”⁵¹ The contact information has been updated, but this procedure is still in place and available on the MC USA website.⁵²

Two years later, in December 2002, MC USA added a companion piece, entitled “Justice Making: The Church Responds to Clergy Misconduct.” As noted in its introduction, the earlier document from 2000 “focused solely on a procedure for determining guilt or acquittal.” The companion piece addressed “support, accountability, discipline . . . and other issues not addressed fully in the Misconduct Procedure.”⁵³ For instance, it gave more detail about providing support to both the complainant and the accused and their families, how to proceed when a finding was made, how to communicate with all concerned, and how to provide accountability and work at prevention.

Meanwhile, M.C.C.’s Women’s Concerns staff continued to provide resources to the church, including:

- The 1995 handbook, *Expanding the Circle of Caring: Ministering to the Family Members of Survivors and Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse*, compiled by Esther Epp-Tiessen.
- An *Advocacy Training Manual: Advocating for Survivors of Sexual Abuse by a Church Leader or Caregiver*, by Heather Block, 1996. In 2003, this was condensed into a booklet, *Understanding Sexual Abuse by a Church Leader or Caregiver*, revised and reprinted in 2011.
- A series of “Women Doing Theology” conferences, held every two or three years from 1992 to 2007, at Conrad Grebel College, Bluffton College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Bethel College, and Eastern Mennonite University. The final one at A.M.B.S. was a gathering of Anabaptist Latinas, Asian women, and women of African descent in the U.S. and Canada.

50. Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure, part 1, page 2, at <http://resources.mennoniteusa.org/resource-center/resources/leadership-development-packets/sexual-misconduct/>.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid. See <http://resources.mennoniteusa.org/resource-center/resources/leadership-development-packets/sexual-misconduct/>. The Mennonite Church Canada version is available at: <http://resources.mennonitechurch.ca/ResourceView/43/16285>.

53. See Justice Making: The Church Responds to Clergy Misconduct – Part II, at the MC USA website.

- A website, "Abuse: Response and Prevention," initiated in 2003, which included stories, worship resources, definitions, and educational resources.⁵⁴
- A packet, "Making Your Sanctuary Safe: Resources for Developing Abuse Prevention Policies," introduced in 2003 and updated in 2007.
- A packet, "Pornography: the Secret Sin," 2004, followed in 2013 by the booklet *Pornography: Lies, Truth and Hope*.⁵⁵
- "Home Shouldn't be a Place that Hurts" brochures, developed in 2005 and reprinted several times over the past decade, with many thousands of copies distributed throughout Canada and the United States. These were also published in Spanish, French, German, and Chinese.

Another resource, initiated in 2009 and fostered especially by Jeanette Harder, professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha's Grace Abbott School of Social Work, was the formation of a group called "Dove's Nest" that focused on keeping "children and youth safe in their homes, churches, and communities."⁵⁶ Harder's book, *Let the Children Come: Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect*, explains types of child abuse and neglect, Biblical teachings, risk and protective factors for abuse, and steps for prevention. "Dove's Nest" also promotes and distributes the *Circle of Grace* safe environment curriculum, which is available free to all MC USA congregations.⁵⁷ In 2013, they proposed the statement "Protecting and Nurturing Our Children and Youth," which was adopted by the MC USA general assembly that summer.⁵⁸

Another important program has been the MC USA Women in Leadership Project. Initiated in 2009 by Mennonite Women USA to understand and address declining numbers of women in leadership in Mennonite Church USA, this project seeks to "name and transform sexism in Mennonite Church USA."⁵⁹ Now operating under the MC USA Executive Board, the project's diverse steering committee provides

54. M.C.C. discontinued this site as an educational resource in 2014.

55. Some of these resources can be found on the M.C.C. website: <http://mcc.org/learn/what/categories/abuse-prevention>.

56. See <http://DovesNest.net>.

57. See <http://DovesNest.net/circleofgrace>.

58. See 2013 Resolutions, <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/delegate/>.

59. See <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/transformational-peacemaking/women-in-leadership-project/>.

guidance to the project and intentionally attends to the ways in which race and class intersect with sexism in oppressing women. In February 2014 the Women in Leadership Project hosted a conference, "All You Need is Love: Honoring the Diversity of Women's Voices in Theology," in Leesburg, Va. With nearly 200 women in attendance, the conference addressed the difficult realities of women's lives, as well as the hope and nurture they find in God and their relationships with one another.⁶⁰

Finally, Mennonite Women USA has done important work through their Sister Care program to help women find healing and the resources needed to reach out to others more effectively. Created by Rhoda Keener, Carolyn Holderread Heggen, and Ruth Lapp Guengerich, the *Sister Care* manual has been translated into Spanish, Kekchi and Portuguese. Their seminars have reached thousands of women throughout the United States as well as Canada, Central and South America, India, and Nepal.⁶¹

PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER WORK

In what I have written thus far, I have sought primarily to give an historically accurate account of where our Mennonite journey regarding abuse has taken us. In what follows, I share several proposals for further work that grow out of my twenty-five years of working on this issue.

Certainly, much has been done over these years to deal with abuse and sexualized violence. We are now able to talk about this violence more forthrightly and many more resources are available to congregational members and church leaders to protect and empower those who are vulnerable. There has been a substantial shift from a default assumption that accusations of abuse, especially against church leaders, are likely to be false and in any case should be kept quiet, to an assumption that they should be taken seriously and investigated carefully, and that disciplinary action should be taken if the accusations prove to be true. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to find these concerns included alongside the church's more traditional understanding of peace theology.

In 2010, for example, Mennonites helped plan a major ecumenical conference at A.M.B.S. called "Peace Among the Peoples." Initially, the program did not include attention to violence against women, although

60. For videos, worship resources, reflections, and papers from the conference, see <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/transformational-peace-making/women-in-leadership-project/all-you-need-is-love-conference-resources/>.

61. See <https://www.mennonitewomenusa.org/resources/sister-care-seminars/>. While these seminars do not focus on sexual violence, women often share about these experiences and their search for healing.

this was added later.⁶² A group of younger women insisted that these themes be included in the church's peace agenda, and created a zine, *Breath of Hope: Addressing Sexual Violence in the Peace Movement and the World*, to distribute at the conference.⁶³ A collection of heart-wrenching stories, reflections, definitions, and questions, it specifically addressed

the fact that those of us who work for peace among people on the international level do not acknowledge and take into account the ways women's voices (and bodies) have been subjugated and silenced in peace work because of sexual violence in the movement. This silencing leaves out half the population and takes movements in an unsustainable direction, making it impossible to obtain peace among the peoples of this world.⁶⁴

These women also organized a special meeting during the conference, a meeting that drew so many people they completely overwhelmed the size of the room.

More recent efforts have continued to challenge the church to acknowledge its past failures, and to do more to protect those members who are vulnerable to sexualized violence. In 2012, Rachel Halder, a 2010 Goshen College graduate currently living in Lama, New Mexico, launched a website called "Our Stories Untold," intending it to be a "safe and open space to discuss sexualized violence. . . ." ⁶⁵ Hilary Jerome Scarsella and Barbra Graber joined her in 2013, and in July that year they issued a "Call to Prayer for Sexual Healing in the Mennonite Church," encouraging people to pray this prayer each week.⁶⁶

In addition, Graber wrote "What's to be done about John Howard Yoder?" an article that generated significant discussion in several forums.⁶⁷ These developments, along with work that A.M.B.S. had

62. The planners explained initially that they wanted to focus on war and militarism, since there was more ecumenical disagreement in those areas. Shortly before the conference, however, I was asked to give a presentation on peace theology and violence against women.

63. As reported in its introduction, "This zine is one of the outcomes of the 'becoming undone' gathering," an Anabaptist theological accompaniment to the US Social Forum, held June 22-27, 2010, in Detroit. It is available as a .pdf document.

64. *Breath of Hope*, 1.

65. See www.ourstoriesuntold.com.

66. See <http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/2013/07/03/a-call-to-prayer-for-sexual-healing-in-the-mennonite-church-every-thursday-at-three-even-if-you-stopped-praying-long-ago-2/>.

67. This was first published by *Our Stories Untold*, July 17, 2013, <http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/2013/07/17/whats-to-be-done-about-john-howard-yoder/>.

already undertaken, led MC USA and A.M.B.S. to form a discernment group to deal more forthrightly with Yoder's legacy of sexual violence. As Ervin Stutzman, executive director of MC USA, wrote in a August 12, 2013, column in *The Mennonite*, he and Sara Wenger Shenk, A.M.B.S. president, "are shaping a discernment process that will enable the church to move toward deeper reconciliation and healing for victims of sexual abuse by John Howard Yoder. We hope to build on the healing work that has been done in the past, informed by current understandings regarding the dynamics of sexual abuse."⁶⁸

Although often difficult, these new efforts have brought renewed energy to the work of addressing and decreasing the levels of sexualized violence in Mennonite families, churches, and communities. Clearly, we are not yet finished. Each generation needs to continue the work, hopefully building on what was done before.

One area that has been disappointing is that men have not been more visible and active in this work. While some have spoken to these issues, there is not the same level of urgency or priority given to sexualized violence as to other peace and justice issues. In addition, little denominational or M.C.C. staff time is given to these efforts, and women continue to do much of the work as volunteers, or by raising their own funds.⁶⁹

There is also much work to be done in understanding power dynamics, and how they serve to privilege those who are white, male, heterosexual, and educated. Perhaps because of our historic Anabaptist emphasis on servanthood, men still find it difficult to acknowledge this power and recognize how easily they overlook, interrupt, or minimize women's voices. This is especially true if women need to share difficult truths about their lives and experiences in the church. It is just as difficult today—and perhaps even more so—for women to openly name sexism and the effects of patriarchy on their lives. And it is still difficult for survivors of sexualized violence to find adequate support and the resources they need for healing.

It was then published as a guest post on Ted Grimsrud's blog, *Thinking Pacifism* on July 31, 2013, <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2013/07/>; and in the *Mennonite World Review*, Sept. 2, 2013, 10.

68. <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/acknowledging-difficult-stories-of-sexual-abuse-from-the-past-2/>. More information about the work of the Discernment Group is available at: <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/john-howard-yoder-discernment-group/>.

69. The MC USA Women in Leadership Project, for example, relies on volunteers and staff time that is now less than 25 percent FTE. The project also raised several thousand dollars to pay former staff. M.C.C. US discontinued the women's advocacy position in 2011.

A third area of work is to continue examining our theology and worship practices. We need to understand how our hymns, sermons, and educational materials speak to those who have been sexually violated. Do survivors hear good news when we speak of suffering, the cross, obedience, forgiveness, and reconciliation? Can they find hope and healing in our worship? Do we offer liberation and justice as well as peace?

Further, we need to give much more attention to the structural nature of sexualized violence. These sins are not only personal and individual, but also part of larger systems designed to maintain male power and deny full and equal personhood to women. Despite some progress toward equality, men continue to be portrayed in advertising, language, media, entertainment and religious images as the standard human being and women as secondary. This is exacerbated by an increasingly violent and pervasive use of pornography that encourages all to see women as objects for men to use for their own needs and pleasure, and for women to accept this lot as their due.⁷⁰

Finally, we need to acknowledge how sexualized violence has been used in the conquest of other nations and peoples. This indeed is one of the chief blind spots of the work of the Mennonite church over these past decades, as most work has focused on the experiences of white women. We have given little attention to understanding how sexual violence has intersected with race and class to subjugate people of color. In her book *Conquest, Sexual Violence and the American Indian Genocide*, Andrea Smith argues that “The project of colonial sexual violence establishes the ideology that Native bodies are inherently violable—and, by extension, that Native lands are inherently violable.”⁷¹ This also applied to women of African descent. As she says,

African American women were also viewed as inherently rapable. Yet where colonizers used sexual violence to eliminate Native populations, slave owners used rape to reproduce an exploitable labor force. . . . And because Black women were seen as the

70. Gail Dines and Robert Jensen, “Pornography is a left issue,” Dec. 6, 2005, Znet, zcomm.org/znetarticle/pornography-is-a-left-issue-by-gail-dines. See also Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).

71. Andrea Smith, *Conquest* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005), 12. See also Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

property of their slave owners, their rape at the hands of these men did not “count.”⁷²

As the church moves forward therefore, we need to learn how sexualized violence intersects with other layers of domination and exploitation. Smith proposes, in fact, that we should center women of color in the analysis, for when we do this

it becomes clear that we must develop approaches that address interpersonal, state (e.g. colonization, police brutality, prisons) and structural (e.g. racism, poverty) violence simultaneously. In addition, . . . we may actually build a movement that more effectively ends violence not just for women of color but for all people.⁷³

As people committed to peace, this indeed is what we seek, a world of light and hope for all people, where no one lives in fear and pain. May we continue to seek God’s wisdom and courage on this journey.

72. *Ibid*, 16.

73. *Ibid*, 160.

Seventy Times Seven: Abuse and the Frustratingly Extravagant Call To Forgive

GAYLE GERBER KOONTZ*

Abstract: Jesus called his disciples to forgive without limit. But in situations of abuse an emphasis on immediate forgiveness of abusers, on enemy love, and on reconciliation ignores the fact that forgiveness is an unfolding psychological and spiritual process, that it includes a significant decision not to retaliate, and that it is a generous moral act that may be separated from feelings of forgiveness and from interpersonal reconciliation. In walking with both the injured and those who injure, the church has a role in fostering restorative justice. This includes the offer of healing relationships and resources to those who have been abused and the initiation of relationships that call offenders to account with a view toward their repentance and restoration. Within the framework of restorative justice, the offering and receiving of divine and human forgiveness has deeper integrity.

If God were not forgiving, heaven would be empty.

– Zimbabwean proverb

That's the theological bottom line: all of us fall short in the light of a just and holy God, but the God known through the long biblical story is also a forgiving God. But as true—and profoundly true—as this bottom line conviction is, it ignores the complicated, practical fine print. Exactly what does this conviction mean for those who have been abused, for abusers, and for the families, friends, and churches who are called to love both?

As contemporary theologians have been quick to point out, affirming a God who forgives does *not* mean we should offer cheap forgiveness to those who violate others. It does *not* mean we are free to blame those who have been abused for their inability to forgive the people who violated them. Rather, it means that appeal to divine justice in relation to abuse must always be tempered by the divine offer of forgiveness and call to transformation. It means that in our appeal to God's forgiveness we must remember that God's restorative justice includes the pain of taking responsibility for our wrong actions as well as the invitation to

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live differently. Affirming trust in a God who both judges and forgives also means humility of spirit: we recognize that it is not we but God who can truly judge the human soul.

Further, holding fast to both divine justice and forgiveness may call for different responses from those who violate others, from those who are violated by others, and from Christian friends who stand alongside both. This suggests that we need a more nuanced Christian theology and practice of forgiveness than we often assume.¹

HONORING THE VOICE OF INJURED ONES

Theological convictions, if they are to shimmer in our souls, must be able to withstand the messiness of life, including the realities that color the lives of those whom the Bible refers to both literally and symbolically as “widows and orphans,” “the poor,” “the exiled,” or “the least of these.” A Christian theology of forgiveness that speaks to people who have been violated must attend to the bodily experience and particular feelings that emerge when one has been bullied, beaten, abandoned, sexually assaulted, or abused. Consider just this one story of a high school student getting ready to leave for college, a young woman who as a child had been sexually abused by a churchgoing neighbor.²

When she saw him turning the corner from the alley onto Main Street her stomach dribbled down between her knees. She moved deliberately but slowly so as not to have seemed to have noticed him. She positioned her back in his direction, stared intently at the items in the shop window, and held her breath, hoping she would disappear among those walking the street. She would have to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. She did not want to talk to him. Perhaps he didn't want to talk to her either. It was a short hope, slapped by his voice at her shoulder.

“Ann, may I talk with you a minute.” She didn't want to hear his voice. She didn't want to turn and look at his bald head, wisps of gray at the side, his thin, dry lips French-kissing hers, poking, sliding. She shivered involuntarily and turned.

“Yes?” Stone-faced. “What do you want?” She was being rude. She didn't care. Disgust surrounded her like a shield.

She held the shield guardedly, remembering the man in his dark bed inviting three or four of them, neighborhood kids, inside for lemonade and

1. This essay was substantially revised from Gayle Gerber Koontz, “As We Forgive Others: Christian Forgiveness and Feminist Pain,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 68 (April 1994), 170-193.

2. While this is a true story, based on personal knowledge, Ann is a fictional name. It is based on the experience of a Mennonite woman from Ohio in the 1950s and 1960s.

then to the dark place to unzip his pants. "Do you want to touch it?" She had backed away from him, out into the sunshine and toward home, where on other days she had watched him approach, each time hoping Mom would be home from work soon so he could not come in alone and stand beside her, reaching into her pants, rubbing, rubbing. The times she had sat on the porch swing, shelling peas while Mother cooked supper. "I'll help shell," he smiled. "Sit closer." Rubbing, rubbing. "There, does that feel good?" And the nod. The silent, reluctant nod.

"I just wanted to say," his voice broke, interrupting her memories. She saw his pink eyes blur behind his glasses. She looked down at his rough gray shirt and back at his face.

"What?" There was no pity in her voice.

"I'm sorry for those things . . ."

She stared at him, unsmiling. The fishing picnic. He had sent the others off with worms and kept her behind on the blanket. Standing, he had rubbed himself on her and put his hard thing in her pants and after a while he had wet himself on her stomach, cleaning it up with his handkerchief, saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," but it was just dirty and she had felt sick.

"Will you forgive me?" His mouth trembled at the edges.

She did not look away, remembering the last time he had tried to kiss her by the refrigerator in the kitchen while her mother was grocery shopping. She had felt it growing for a long time, like a balloon gathering air, silently, stretching, forming itself inside her and it had surprised him, she knew, with its force. "No!" She had pushed him away from her mouth. "Stop it! I don't like it. Don't do this anymore. And don't ever bother my sister." He had left. She had told no one any of it. She had avoided him. Her last words had hung between them for years.

"Will you forgive me?" he now repeated, quavering.

"I don't know. I don't feel like it." She turned and walked away. It was the last time she saw him. Two years later, away at college, she noticed his obituary in the hometown paper.

It would be easy, given Christian understandings of forgiveness, to blame Ann for her attitude and action—or for her to blame herself. First of all, there is the Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us our debts, *as we forgive our debtors.*" We repeat this pointed prayer over and over again with millions of other Christians. It is part of the ongoing prayer of our community, a formative prayer for our life together. In Matthew, the prayer Jesus gave us is followed by the warning that if we forgive others their trespasses, God will also forgive us; but if we do not forgive others, neither will God forgive our trespasses (Mt. 6:14-15).

Even more direct for someone like Ann are those verses in Luke:

Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, "I repent," you must forgive. (Lk. 17:3-4)

These words give all Christians pause. They are especially sobering when we feel outrage at violent acts and repeated abuses. The more we see and feel righteous anger, the more we have to forgive. And the more personally we experience injury—experiences of physical violence, significant losses, or manipulative emotional abuse at the hands of others—the harder it is to forgive those who inflict it. How can we forgive those who blatantly disregard what we know to be critical "no trespassing" zones? Maybe Ann *should* forgive her neighbor, but what if she doesn't *feel* like it? Her abuser does, after all, appear to be sorry; and his repentance seems to be genuine since the behaviors had stopped years before. In any case, would it make any difference if he were not really repentant but was acting out of fear for what she might do or say to others? Should she not forgive him anyway?

It is true that Christian faith offers and calls us to extravagant forgiveness both as a sign of the coming reign of God³ and with the hope of reconciling broken relationships among God and humans. According to the witness of Scripture and the church, God offers to us human sinners not measure for measure but divine forgiveness undeserved. Even when we have not yet changed our ways, God's spirit calls us—as Jesus called Zacchaeus—to draw near.⁴ God holds us hopefully, inviting change. When someone is repentant and asks our forgiveness, we should not deny it.

And yet we can understand Ann's difficulty. For most of us, too, have in some degree stood in Ann's shoes—injured, angry, feeling relatively powerless as we relive hurt or trauma. Significant injuries limit our ability to trust others, engender false shame, isolate us, and often leave us bitter and resentful. We may seek punishment in order to hurt the one who hurt us or restitution even when there is no restitution to be had. We may be bound to the past, to fear, guilt, or low self-esteem in ways that infect our spirit, separating us from joyful life with God and others.

3. N. T. Wright outlines his understanding of Jesus' symbols of the kingdom, including forgiveness, which serves as a remarkable sign that God was indeed returning Israel from exile and reinstating the Hebrew people as a "light to the nations." This and other signs "replaced the praxis of Torah as defining characteristics of the restored Israel." *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1999), 69-70.

4. Mary Schertz, a professor of New Testament at A.M.B.S., offered this perspective on the Zacchaeus story in a sermon at Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., in 1993.

In addition, Christians who repeat the centrality of forgiveness, suffering love, proclaim a gospel of reconciliation, and emphasize commitment to an ethic of peace and love of enemy can add injury to injury. Presented with the duty to forgive and be reconciled when they do not feel like it, Ann, and those she represents, feel shame for being inadequate, unforgiving Christians. These cherished theological convictions become another form of blaming the victim.

Does this mean that for the sake of the injured ones the church should back away from emphasizing forgiveness and reconciliation? I do not think so. Not only are forgiveness and reconciliation essential to a biblically grounded, theologically sound Christian faith, our world desperately needs communities of faith committed to reconciling work. Political, economic, racial, ethnic, and sexual boundaries not only define our identities but also set us in conflict and sometimes lead us to war with each other. A Christian and Mennonite heritage has shown us errors in our understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciling love; but it has also shown us the amazing power of God's healing work through them. For the sake of the world that God loves we have reason to cling to these profound aspects of faith that have been tested over time.

God's saving purposes include the creation of a global, reconciling community of men and women in Christ. To support this purpose we need a rich understanding and practice of restorative justice. Christian pacifists have often been criticized for being passive and ignoring the need for interpersonal and structural justice while focusing on love of enemy. Among Mennonites this critique has engendered a more holistic theology and practice of peacemaking and restorative justice.⁵ However, it is also a temptation for contemporary Mennonites standing in a tradition known for its strong commitment to pacifism and suffering love to speak more about justice than forgiveness, as a corrective for what appears to be lack of care for victims. Focus on *restorative* justice for *both* the injured and offenders is one way to emphasize that both love *and* justice, repentance *and* forgiveness, are critical aspects of a reconciling process.

While confessing pain and confronting those who injure are positive steps toward restorative justice, adequate restitution for unjust acts or

5. For a description of restorative justice and its theological basis see the pioneering work of Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1990); and the biblical interpretation of Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), as well as his more recent *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2012).

interpersonal wounds often cannot be made. Therefore the existence of a Spirit-filled reconciling community depends finally on the gifts of divine and human forgiveness. Injuries beget injuries, feed anger, and pluck the fruits of the spirit from the community of faith unless members, who are themselves rooted in God's just and forgiving love, intervene to break cycles of hurt with straight talk, and calls to repent, forgive, and receive new spirits. For this reason, and because many cultures in which the church resides encourage revenge as a proper response to injury, we must continue to foster a strong, nuanced theological and spiritual orientation toward forgiveness.

At the same time we need to take seriously some of the problems that injured ones have identified with the cluster of convictions related to forgiveness, repentance, and reconciliation. Some changes can and ought to be made.

FORGIVENESS IN LIGHT OF INJURED ONES

The theology and practice of forgiveness we formulate, teach, and preach needs to respect the experience of those who have been scarred by violent and abusive behavior. A church that seeks to witness to God's transforming love and power cannot afford to mouth platitudes to the injured. Further, if the church's practice does not include confronting abusers, the offenders often go on to harm others, not only perpetuating injury but also mistrust of the church that deafens injured ones to its teaching about forgiveness.

It is important also to remember that abusers injure not only the direct recipients of the actions. Often those close to the recipients are injured as well.⁶ When a suicide bomber kills himself and those around him, many people besides those killed or physically wounded also suffer injury and loss. In relation to sexual abuse by church leaders, the families of the abused and abuser are often shamed and sometimes isolated, and the congregations and institutions with which the leader is associated may bear the shame and stain of the abuse and the related mistrust of the watching world.⁷ Our identification of those who are "abused" should

6. Christopher Marshall makes a distinction between *primary victims* and *secondary victims*. He suggests that when injustice or bitterness created by an offense is still felt by later generations there are also "*subsequent victims* of the offender, who may also need to find a place of release from their pain through forgiving the absent offender . . ."—*Beyond Retribution*, 265.

7. Karen A. McClintock in *Sexual Shame: An Urgent Call to Healing* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) notes how the shame of a leader "infects the whole body of Christ with a heavy sense of moral failure, whose powerlessness can become chronic." In order to heal this, "clergy and congregations will need to address sexual issues openly," which requires prior steps of education and conversational skill among both leaders and congregational participants. See chapters 2 and 8.

take this into account. The actions of those who injure individuals or groups harm people in widening circles.

Sometimes even offenders are victims. They may themselves have suffered physical or sexual abuse as children. Less dramatically, in a process of church discipline abusers may have been treated unfairly or believe they were treated so. Church members may refuse to trust a discipline process carried out by leaders and therefore foster rumors and resentment that unjustly harms a repentant offender. Although the focus for offenders must be on their own repentance, insofar as they harbor bitterness and desire to retaliate, they also are called to forgive those who they believe have wronged them.

A theology of forgiveness and reconciliation that has integrity in relation to people injured by physical or emotional violence and abuse would have at least the following dimensions.

1. *It would articulate a vision of a community in which justice and love embrace.*

It would reflect a holistic biblical understanding of God's saving work in the world, marked by both justice and forgiveness. God's desire for just and loving relationships among humans—rather than an apparent harmony that hides injustice—suggests several important actions when injury has occurred: the silence that isolates injured ones must be broken; abusers must be confronted with the wrongness and results of their actions and steps taken to hold them accountable for ongoing actions; and resources for healing must be directed to the needs of those who have been injured. Forgiveness is not the first or only word when Christians face injury.

In addition, remembering God's passion for restorative justice includes supporting just power dynamics between the injurers and injured. Injured ones are likely to feel extremely powerless and are often in fact quite powerless economically, socially, or physically in relation to those who injure them. Ann, who was injured as a relatively powerless child, was not ready to forgive, perhaps in part because she continued to feel powerless, disadvantaged, and shamed in relation to the abuser and their social contact. She was isolated in her embarrassment: "She had told no one any of it."

Some cultural roles and ideals for women also contribute to low self-esteem and a sense of powerlessness in relation to abusers. For example, consider formation that discourages girls and women from expressing initiative and anger, presses them to be "nice" all the time, expects them to yield to the needs or desires of others, and assumes they should be ready always to understand and forgive. British playwright and novelist Fay Weldon writes in *Female Friends*:

Understand, and forgive, my mother said, and the effort has quite exhausted me. I could do with some anger to energize me, and bring me back to life again. But where can I find that anger? Who is to help me? My friends? I have been understanding and forgiving my friends, my female friends, for as long as I can remember. . . . Understand husbands, wives, fathers, mothers. . . . understand fur-coated women and children without shoes. Understand school—Jonah, Job, and the nature of Deity; understand Hitler and the Bank of England and the behavior of Cinderella's sisters. Preach acceptance to wives and tolerance to husbands; patience to parents and compromise to the young. . . . Grit your teeth, endure. Understand, forgive, accept . . . O Mother, what you taught me! And what a miserable, crawling, sniveling way to go, the worn-out slippers neatly placed beneath the bed, careful not to give offense.⁸

When a person has been encouraged to develop the habit of indiscriminate forgiveness, eagerness to forgive may express lack of respect for oneself and one's own worth. Women struggle to determine when it is appropriate to understand and forgive and when it is appropriate to blame and be angry rather than to be "careful not to give offense." Such women sometimes find themselves in a psychological Catch-22 when they are faced with the need to forgive someone who injured them. If they forgive too quickly or inappropriately they may slip back into the ocean of unworthiness and lack of self-respect—the sea from which they are just emerging. If they refuse to forgive they fail not only to be "nice," but to be truly "Christian."

Christian ethicist Beverly Harrison's essay "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love"⁹ has been helpful to many injured ones who have rightly felt anger and blame toward their abusers but have then felt shame for feeling angry. This shame is exacerbated when others in the church reinforce it by criticizing the injured persons for allowing the sun to "go down on your anger" (Eph. 4:26). A cycle ripe for the growth of resentment has begun. Harrison suggests that one way to break this cycle is to recognize the valid role that anger and blame play in the work of love. If injured ones can accept and value their anger as a sign of moral sensitivity rather than of moral insensitivity, and if they can recognize the cultural dynamics at work so they can identify when they feel a false sense of shame for being angry, then they will be freer to direct the energy from their anger into creative acts toward change.

8. Quoted from Jeffrie G. Murphy, "Forgiveness and Resentment," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 7 (1982), 503.

9. Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 3-21.

A step that could help to prepare Ann for the drama of forgiveness¹⁰ would be for others to help strengthen her sense of social and personal power. If she could find the space to share her shame, fear, and resentment with some other members of the Christian community who could hear and receive her hurt and anger, affirm her right to blame her abuser, and offer her respect and acceptance, she might gain voice, self, and a sense of empowerment that could eventually contribute to the freedom to forgive her debtor.

Additional expressions of respect for justice in relationships might include providing advocates for injured ones in confronting abusers or doing so on their behalf, and protecting the public identities of those abused if it appears that transparency would add to further social shaming.

2. *A theology relevant to those who have been abused would highlight not only the gift of God's grace in healing from sin, but also God's grace in healing from injury and shame.*

Much Christian theology and teaching has focused on God's grace as it heals our guilt and sin.¹¹ However, in his book *Shame and Grace*, Lewis Smedes suggests that many people need healing from false or undeserved shame.

Many who bear false shame are overly conscientious, responsible, and moral people, but they feel "inadequate, defective, unworthy, or not fully valid" as human beings.¹² Undeserved shame arises from "an image of what we ought to be that is concocted out of false ideals."¹³ Sources of undeserved shame include unaccepting parents, graceless religion, false cultural ideals, and social shame—when we are rejected because we belong to a group that is despised or mistrusted.

Clinical psychologist and Methodist pastor Karen McClintock notes that when shame is related to taboo sexual experiences in the home, church, or community, the feelings of shame grow and intensify. "An extremely shame-bound person cuts empathetic ties to others to protect him or herself from re-experiencing these feelings." And feelings of shame "keep the secrets secret."¹⁴

10. Lewis B. Smedes refers to the process of forgiveness as a "drama in five scenes."—*Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 136-137.

11. For example, the article on "Grace" in the *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. John MacQuarrie and James Childress (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), refers only to grace in relation to sinners.

12. Merle Fossum, quoted by Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 3.

13. Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 38, 53.

14. McClintock, *Sexual Shame*, 24.

Smedes concluded that while the answer to guilt is “pardoning grace,” or forgiveness for wrongs we have done, the answer to shame is “accepting grace.” Since the fear of rejection and abandonment stands behind the feeling of shame, the experience of being accepted for who one is with clear awareness of what one has been through—rage, pain, mistrust, and all—is the beginning of healing. The good news for those suffering from false shame is that the God we know through Christ accepts, cradles, holds, and affirms us “totally as the spiritual stew we are.” Grace heals by removing our fear of rejection based on false shame.¹⁵

If our proclamation of the good news in Christ focuses only or primarily on God’s gracious response to our sin and guilt, the message about the healing and transforming power of divine grace for those who suffer from shame they do not deserve will be hidden or undermined.

3. *A theology attentive to the effects of abuse would speak about forgiveness or letting go of the injury for the sake of the injured one.*

Christians have traditionally talked about the importance of forgiveness for the sake of the offender and to pave the way for reconciliation between the offender and the injured one. In recent years, secular as well as faith-oriented counselors and peacemakers have begun to speak of the significance of the act and process of forgiveness for the injured ones themselves.¹⁶

Albert Haase, a Franciscan priest based in Taiwan who has given workshops on spirituality throughout the United States, has observed that “it takes a lot of emotional and psychological energy to keep a wound open, to keep a grudge alive. The longer I allow a wound to fester, the more bitterness, anger and self-pity poison my blood and eat at my heart.”¹⁷ Resentment and mistrust affect the relationship of the injured one not only to the offender but to others as well.

In addition to the way injury affects an injured one’s ability to develop trusting and healthy relationships, other challenges remain. Mennonite psychologist Carolyn Holderread Heggen has noted that for women who are physically and sexually abused, issues of faith and spirituality, self-esteem, and humiliation of the body make the process of healing even more complex and difficult. They also make healing critical for the sake of the injured one. As we become aware that our shame is undeserved,

15. Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 107-108.

16. Christine E. Gudorf is among those who have attempted to rethink Christian faith and ethics while taking seriously the experience of those who suffer from moral injury.—Gudorf, *Victimization: Examining Christian Complicity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 93.

17. Martha Sawyer Allen, “Forgiveness Brings Joy,” *Elkhart Truth*, Nov. 27, 1993, B1, 2.

we often feel increasing resentment toward those who contributed to our sense of false shame. Resentment hinders the healing of shame.

“Forgiveness is a process which allows the victim to let go of the intense emotional pain associated with her abuse and replace it with inner resolution and peace,” Heggen has written. “Forgiveness disarms the power of abuse to continue causing pain and turmoil and revictimization.”¹⁸ She believes it is possible for a victim to forgive an offender even when the offender remains unrepentant, and that doing so can help the injured one.

By letting go, the offended refuses to let herself be held captive by the offender’s unwillingness to repent. . . . Extending unrequested forgiveness empowers the survivor. It frees her to experience God’s grace, healing, and joy in her life despite the lack of reconciliation with her offender.¹⁹

Smedes counseled those suffering from undeserved shame not to wait too long to forgive—to let go of the resentment caused by the injury—because in time “resentment becomes less what we feel than what we are.” Surrendering it, then, means tearing away a segment of our self, which is more difficult and painful to do.²⁰

Ronald Rolheiser, a Jesuit priest, believes, like Heggen and Smedes, that healing from abuse is not only a psychological process, but also a spiritual one. In *The Holy Longing* he turns to the Easter narrative, a powerful spiritual frame for dealing with losses of various kinds, including the loss of innocence and joy, the loss of trust, the loss of health, and the loss of being loved and honored in a relationship, all of which can be part of the experience of abuse. These losses represent a real death, like the death of Jesus on Good Friday. Don’t minimize the violence and pain, he says. Mourn them. But don’t cling to them; don’t cling to the past as perhaps Mary of Magdala wanted to do when she met and wanted to hold on to the resurrected Christ in the garden. In order for the disciples to receive a new spirit at Pentecost—the kind of spirit needed to live with the power of the Holy Spirit but without the human body of Christ—they needed to “let go” of the Jesus that had been with them in the flesh. They needed time to adjust to living without Jesus. They needed the “letting go” of the ascension in order to receive a different, new life—a life that contained the loss of Jesus, but that also

18. Carolyn Holderread Heggen’s *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993) articulated this in a significant way for Mennonites. While this book needs updating—to include, for example, more on sexual abuse of children—it remains a pioneering work on the subject.

19. Heggen, *Sexual Abuse*, 134.

20. Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 139.

eventuated in new power. Only after letting go of the past and adjusting to a new present did the believers experience Pentecost.²¹ Healing from abuse involves letting go of the bitterness and desire to retaliate that stem from the pain of the past in order to receive Spirit-filled gifts of renewed trust, hope, and joy.

4. *It would distinguish between the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation.*

This distinction has grown in significance with the development of the idea that forgiveness is important for the sake of the injured person. Forgiveness is a moral act of the injured one that is independent of a restored relationship between the offender and injured person. In the words of a commentator on pastoral care, "Forgiveness is not the equivalent of reconciliation . . . ; it is the means by which barriers to reconciliation (which may or may not follow) are removed."²²

In a historic peace church that cherishes a strong theology of reconciliation, it is easy to assume that if someone who has suffered from violence or violation has come to forgive an abuser, then she should be ready to be reconciled with the person who injured her. However, as may be the case with a third party's call to forgive an abuser, a call for personal reconciliation may feel like a moral club to an injured one, pressing her to relate to an offender when she does not feel strong enough to do so.

In a Christian perspective, the ultimate hope is for reconciliation and communion—with God, other humans, and the earth. The healing of relationships that have been scarred by abuse is part of this. However, such reconciliation is not always possible. Sometimes an offender refuses to acknowledge responsibility for the injury. Sometimes the injured person does not know or loses contact with the injurer as may be the case in rape or situations of genocide. Sometimes an injured one is not ready to forgive until after an offender has died, as was the case for Ann. Sometimes the hurt is so deep that the injured ones choose to offer forgiveness but do not have the strength or desire to continue in personal relationship with those who abused them. However impossible reconciliation may seem or be, forgiveness of offenders remains both possible and a Christian hope.

21. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 141-166.

22. B. H. Childs, "Forgiveness," *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 438.

FORGIVENESS AS MORAL AND EMOTIONAL LETTING GO

What exactly does it mean to forgive someone who has injured you if it does not entail reconciliation? It is first of all a moral act rather than a feeling, though the two are related.

Consider for a moment the economic image of an owner and debtor, the image to which Jesus appealed in the Lord's Prayer. Someone who has access to wealth loans some of it to a poorer person. As so frequently happens in tenant systems, the debtor may become more and more dependent on the owner until he or she loses everything or falls deeply into a debt that can never be repaid. There is no way out, except either bankruptcy or forgiveness of the debt. The rather literal principle is simple: rather than exact justice, people who hold others in their power economically ought to forgive those who cannot pay their debts. This generous spirit reflects God's spirit in relation to us.

We can expand this principle to include not only material debts owed us but also moral debts owed us because others have trespassed against us. When another injures us, that person "owes" us at least an apology or perhaps restitution or reparations. If they consistently or deeply injure us, their moral debt to us may increase to the point where they cannot make restitution. As far as we are concerned they are "morally bankrupt." There is no way out for them but to declare bankruptcy and for their debt to be forgiven. Jesus' principle continues to apply: rather than exact justice, powerful people ought to forgive weak ones who cannot pay their debts.

But does this apply to those who have been abused? They are not the "powerful ones" in the relationship, are they? They are the ones who have been robbed of physical or emotional well-being. Even though it seems counterintuitive, the one who has been harmed in a relationship is more powerful than the abuser in one significant way: morally. In an essay translated from Swedish, Christian ethicist Carl Brakenhielm has defined forgiveness as a "remotivating act" in a situation of moral conflict.²³ A moral injury, he wrote, robs people of rights that belong to them as human beings. The injurer has used personal power to rob another, to establish a relationship in which the injurer says, in effect, "I am up here and you are down there." However, from a moral perspective, it is the *injured* one who is "up" and the offender who is "down." When Ann as a young adult met her abuser on the street, for example, she was "up" and he was "down" in this sense.

23. Carl Reinhold Brakenhielm, *Forgiveness*, tr. Thor Hall (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1993), 15.

When others injure us morally or rob us of our right to be respected as persons, they “owe” us an apology or restitution. If someone or a group consistently or profoundly injures us—as in physical or sexual abuse or systemic racial injustice—that person’s or group’s moral debt to us may increase to the point that the offender(s) cannot make adequate restitution. The offender is “down” in relation to the injured one’s moral rights.

Forgiveness is a remotivating choice and process that changes the *moral character* of a relationship that has been injured by moral offense. Brakenhielm explained it this way: Someone who truly desires the forgiveness of another person seeks to affirm the human rights and personal worth of the injured person. The one who grants forgiveness affirms the offender’s human worth, which the injury obscured.

Forgiveness entails both moral criticism, the source of resentment, *and* the effort to affirm the recipient’s worth as a human being and child of God. While the injured person lets go of the moral debt, he or she does not let go of the commitment to justice, which is the root of moral criticism. Forgiveness is not saying, “It’s OK,” as if there were no significant moral failure. If there were no serious wrongdoing, there would be no need for forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean letting go of justice, but holding on to God’s restorative and compassionate justice. In this perspective, “forgiveness is a way of pursuing justice, not the abandonment of justice.”²⁴

Forgiveness requires extravagant generosity of spirit because the injured one has to let go of the moral advantage she holds over the injurer. It may be the only thing the one who has been hurt can withhold from the offender in order to retain some power and self-respect in the relationship and to communicate the depth of the injury. Sometimes church members blame those who have experienced abuse, their families, and others close to them for their inability to forgive without understanding this dynamic. Without also intervening to stop the abuse, to surround and empower the injured ones, they drive the injured ones, who are already alienated in significant ways, further from the arms of the church.

When there are adequate and sensitive resources for healing from injury, however, those who have been abused can and should nurture the disposition to forgive. A disposition to forgive arises from gratitude

24. Joseph Liechty, “Forgiveness,” *Vision* (Spring 2007), 47. For a more extended discussion of the place of forgiveness in restorative justice see Joseph Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place: The Dynamics of Reconciliation,” in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006).

for God's forgiveness of our own injuries to God and others as well as from the joy and confidence of being accepted for who we are in contrast to the rejection we may face from others. As Brakenhielm has put it,

I cannot at one and the same time believe in God's forgiveness [and acceptance] and be hardened against other persons whose life is under the same grace that mine is. . . . Thankfulness for God's forgiveness [and acceptance] is not really thankfulness if it does not also come to expression in humans in turn forgiving other humans.²⁵

Focusing on gratitude to God for what is life-giving in ongoing daily life rather than focusing on injuries and their effects can become part of nurturing a disposition to forgive.

When there is the intention to forgive in light of God's reconciling purposes, the injured or shamed person can take various steps. Joseph Liechty, who spent many years working and teaching in Ireland on themes related to reconciliation, has suggested that the first dimension of the process of forgiveness is *letting go of the right to vengeance*. This choice may coincide with intense anger and hatred,²⁶ but it is a foundational step for eventually overcoming them. While refusing to retaliate is not the whole of forgiveness it is a profound step in the process.²⁷ Even when we feel hatred and pain, we can pray passionately for God's grace to break in and heal what is twisted and broken in us and in those who have injured us. We can pray that God will soften the hearts of offenders and that they will truly repent. We can pray that God remove our desire to retaliate. We can pray for our enemies.

Liechty described another aspect of the process of forgiveness as *offering love before it is deserved*, noting the biblical story of the Prodigal Son as an illustration. This is expressed in the actions and attitudes of the injured ones in response to injury: they make clear that love, not vengeance, is the motivation that shapes them. These, too, are choices that can be made even when feelings of love are not present.

25. Brakenhielm, *Forgiveness*, 91. I have added the words in the brackets.

26. William Neblett has noted that "to grant forgiveness when resentment still persists is not uncommon at all. In fact, many human relationships could not withstand the strain if it were otherwise, if the various purposes which forgiveness serves could not be fulfilled unless every last ounce of resentment were finally wiped away."—"Forgiveness and Ideals," *Mind* 83 (1974), 270.

27. Liechty, "Forgiveness," 46. Most of the Old and New Testament materials seem to assume that conversion and repentance precede God's forgiveness, whether of a nation or of individuals. See Dorothy Jean Weaver, "On Imitating God and Outwitting Satan: Biblical Perspectives on Forgiveness and the Community of Faith," *MQR* 68 (April 1994), esp. 156-161. However Brakenhielm concluded that Jesus' view on the question is not clear. In the story of the prodigal son, for example, the son confesses after he is already in his father's arms.—Brakenhielm, *Forgiveness*, 60.

Part of this action, as Lewis Smedes describes it, involves revising our caricature of the person who injured us. When we taste resentment, our minds draw a caricature of the abuser as a monster and “define his whole person” in terms of how he injured or shamed us. In the process of forgiveness we change our picture of the offender back to the “weak and faulty human being he is (or was).”²⁸

These actions can pave the way for the emotional dimension of healing. In time, sorrow can blend with anger, and compassion and sympathy can break through resentment. Transformed feeling on the part of injured ones can create openness on their part to possible reconciliation with those who have abused them. The practices of letting go of retaliation and offering love before it is deserved are spiritual dispositions and disciplines that undergird openness to both receiving and offering holy grace in the midst of the tragedies of our lives.

Because forgiveness is a process it is not neat and orderly, nor is it fully within our control. It may be more accurate and helpful to speak of forgiving as an ongoing process and attitude rather than a list of steps that happen and are then completed once for all. God’s disposition to forgive us requires God to bear the burden of our offenses—past and present—in an ongoing way even in the midst of our transformation. So does our disposition to forgive others. Our intention to see an offender as other than a “monster” or to revise our feelings may be sincere but not strong enough to sustain the pain of injury at all times. The process of forgiveness may cycle back upon itself, requiring a disposition to be forgiving on an ongoing basis. Sometimes even the best intentions, moral choices, and “letting go” of pain do not seem to open the way to revised feelings toward those who abuse. Developmental psychologist Evelyn Whitehead and her husband, James, a pastoral theologian, remind us that “forgiveness is more than a personal achievement. It is a gift and a grace that, spent by our anger, we must await in hope.”²⁹

CHEAP GRACE AND HONEST REPENTANCE

Those who have been deeply injured are wary of offering cheap grace and rightly so. The wariness comes from seeing all too clearly the

28. Smedes, *Sin and Grace*, 136-137. Miroslav Volf expands on the theme of “rightly remembering” wrongdoings; that is, in a way that heals wounded persons and their relationships with others, including their relation to the perpetrators. His own experience of being repeatedly interrogated and threatened by military personnel in communist Yugoslavia in 1983, followed by his attempts to re-frame the memories of his interrogator, serve as the basis for his reflections.—“God’s Forgiveness and Ours: Memory of Interrogations, Interrogation of Memory,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89, no. 2 (Spring 2007), 213-225.

29. Evelyn and James Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 81.

possible misuses of forgiveness as a tool for power. For example, the demand for forgiveness or the exhortation to forgive can be used to gain or maintain control in a situation. Feigned repentance or false generosity of spirit while forgiving another can also become ways to gain personal advantage over the other. By forgiving too quickly, the offended one may reinforce a continuing, hurtful power relationship or a pattern of abuse that might also endanger others. An offender might even adopt an understanding of God's forgiveness that allows the abuser to go on sinning with a clear conscience.³⁰

"Powerful and wily people use apologies to escape judgment for great evils," Smedes wrote:

They betray a trust and, found out, they say they are sorry for mistakes in judgment. They commit a crime, and they call their crimes errors which they regret. They sneak around their offense on the oiled wheels of apology when their crime calls for nothing less than oceanic tears of remorse. They can get by with their apology because people are not able to tell the difference between the remorse of penitence and regret for bungling a job.³¹

Injured ones who understand the misuse of forgiveness know that "grace cannot be dishonest without being cheap."³² To respond to this problem Liechty suggests that while the loving will to forgive may be unqualified and limitless, the acts of love may be calculated, strategic.³³ For example, the church needs to provide clear behavioral boundaries and supervisory relationships for abusers and safe spaces for children and vulnerable members of the Christian community. The church should also expect and invite repentance.

Those who injure must wait in hope for forgiveness. In genuine repentance an offender makes a serious plea: "I have done wrong. I have violated God's intention for me. I do not want to be separated from God and from you. I want you to trust me. And I promise from now on to be worthy of your trust." Repentance, or *metanoia*, means change or turning; it is more than saying one is sorry. Smedes has described repentance as giant's work: "Only a person who dares to look hard and deep into his potential for doing evil as well as good will have the courage to repent.

30. Brakenhielm, *Forgiveness*, 5-7. Voltaire is reported to have said to the priest who assured him on his deathbed that God forgives all sin, "Of course he will forgive me—that's his job!" — Brakenhielm, *Forgiveness*, 11.

31. Lewis B. Smedes, "Forgiving People Who Do Not Care," *Reformed Journal* 33 (April 1983), 14.

32. *Ibid.*, 17.

33. Liechty cited Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, for referring to this as strategic or calculating love, "Forgiveness," 51.

And only a person who is willing to risk everything for the high stakes of honest reconciliation has the moral power."³⁴

Honest repentance involves:³⁵

1. seeing that the injured one's feelings about what we did are true and accepting her judgment as right;
2. feeling the pain we inflicted on the offended and grieving for it;
3. acknowledging and confessing responsibility for the injury and asking for forgiveness;
4. desiring and promising not to hurt the injured one again and taking steps to address the problems that led to injury the first time;
5. making restitution and demonstrating over time that repentance is sincere and deep.

Based on the importance of repentance and forgiveness in Scripture, the post-biblical church developed doctrine and practices related to them. By 1439 the Roman church held to a doctrine and sacrament of penance that consisted of contrition, confession, restitution, and absolution. Scholastic theology assumed that the first three were necessary to the fourth; popular belief held that they were also *sufficient* conditions for forgiveness.

Luther turned against this latter idea, arguing that works do not make us deserving of God's forgiveness—that forgiveness as well as repentance and faith are gracious gifts of God. Luther's point was that we can never demand forgiveness. We can only ask a favor.³⁶

Anabaptist Mennonites saw the dangers of a broken link between God's gracious forgiveness and our moral lives—that is, of thinking that no matter what we do, God will forgive us. Although they affirmed with Luther the priority of grace, they emphasized the importance of following Christ in life. But in time this came to feel to some like one more condition for receiving God's acceptance and forgiving love.

A solution some have proposed is that while repentance is not a necessary condition for God to forgive an offender, repentance is necessary for a sinner to *experience* grace or forgiveness. In Brakenhielm's words, "One does not have to interpret prayer, repentance, and

34. Smedes, "Forgiving People Who Do Not Care," 14.

35. The following understanding of repentance is drawn from Heggen, *Sexual Abuse*, 123-126, and Smedes, "Forgiving People," 15-16. Smedes notes that confession is not the same as talking to an understanding psychiatrist: "We confess when we cannot stand the hurt we caused another. . . . We confess when naked in the eyes of the person we unfairly wounded we plead nothing but the hope of grace."

36. One can meet Luther's objection and adopt a weaker version that penance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for God's grace.

restitution as demands to be fulfilled in order to obtain forgiveness; one can simply consider them as presuppositions for experiencing God's forgiveness in a meaningful way." Understood in this way, the necessity of repentance "can very well be held together with the thought that God's forgiveness is unconditional and absolute."³⁷

In the context of human relationships this understanding can help mediate the problem of cheap grace. When an injured one offers forgiveness to an unrepentant offender, the offender cannot truly experience it. He cannot receive the grace offered him without honest repentance.

In fact, an unrepentant offender does not want forgiveness. Speaking in the aftermath of World War II, Christian poet, novelist, and historian Charles Williams recognized that "the deeper the injury, the less inclined the evildoer is to ask, even to desire, that the sin may be forgiven—perhaps the less able." We cannot make another repent. If an offender refuses to repent, he will experience a community's acts of restorative justice—which includes requiring him to bear responsibility for wrongdoing—as punishment rather than as one face of grace. If the offender refuses forgiveness, "it is difficult to see what else can be done except to leave him alone."³⁸

Honest repentance is clearly required for reconciliation, for in order for a relationship to be restored in some right form, both parties or groups must be willing to "experience the fellowship of sufferings."³⁹ That includes remembering and confessing pain, forgiving and repenting—all difficult actions. Liechty names *absolution* as the final step in forgiveness: "the wronged party indicates an intention not to bear grudges."⁴⁰ The parallel final step in repentance might be appropriate acts of restitution or sharing resources that indicates the injured one's intrinsic value and the penitent's intention to empower the injured one for a better future. With honest completion of these final dimensions, a renewed relationship between injurer and injured becomes possible. It may be stronger than before the offense or it may be more distant, but the relationship will testify to the possibility that compassionate justice can prevail over violence and violation in abusive relationships.⁴¹

37. Brakenhielm, *Forgiveness*, 79.

38. Charles Williams, *The Forgiveness of Sins* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, [1942] 1984), 165, 199.

39. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 277.

40. Liechty, "Forgiveness," 52.

41. Marshall uses the term "compassionate justice" in the title of his second book on restorative justice.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESURRECTION:
ACCOMPANYING ABUSERS AND THE ABUSED

Christian congregations and friends of Christ are called to live in hope in light of God's coming new creation as announced and embodied in the messiah Jesus and made present through the Holy Spirit. We can have a significant role in healing from injury, promoting justice in relationships, and providing settings for the actual experience of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. But it is hard work that requires spiritual labor, humility, and courage.

An immediate problem is that often the theology and practice of forgiveness among contemporary Protestants, including in many believers churches, are framed in individualistic terms. An individual sits or stands alone before God in public worship, receiving communion, privately confessing sin and seeking forgiveness, privately confessing pain and seeking healing. Depending on the nature of the offense and its conspicuousness, a pastor may "need to get involved." In North America where we imbibe cultural values that emphasize the desires and rights of the self and privacy when it involves sex or money, confessing specific sins or describing our wounds is not only uncomfortable, but also seems in bad taste. Room for the Christian community to address injury shrinks comparatively.

However, when we marginalize the role of the Christian community and its representatives in the mission of restorative justice, we not only let injured ones remain isolated in their pain and allow those who abuse others to avoid facing the impact of their actions or to rationalize them, but we also hinder both from having the eventual experience of forgiveness. In a Christian perspective, healing from injury and healing from sin are spiritual realities. Spiritual healing takes place in the context of Christian worship, community life, and mission. For this to occur the church must provide adequate spiritual space and practical structures that invite and support healing from abuse, admonishment of sin, confession and repentance, forgiving, and the celebration of movement toward reconciliation.

Accompanying the injured. As a companion of those who have been injured, the church can play a significant role in affirming that an abused person's sense of shame is false and agreeing that those who injure should be brought to account. Catholic religious social ethicist Christine Gudorf has pointed out that both victims and those who see themselves as potential victims often have trouble with trust and need to develop a

sense of safety in relation to others. The church can have a strong role “in restoring the capacity of victims to trust” by being trustworthy itself.⁴²

The church can play a further role in empowering those who are injured, especially in situations where an offender has access to social, economic, or institutional power and the injured one has much less. In addition, the silence that frequently surrounds sexual violations enhances the power of the one who abuses. Therefore, breaking the silence or breaking out of the isolation of the offender-injured relationship is often a significant step toward correcting imbalances in power that disadvantage and bind the injured ones. This is a step toward greater justice in the relationship but also a step toward healing and transformation for both injured and injurer.

When there has been abuse but pastors, parents, or other members of the Christian community do not believe abuse has occurred, or make light of it, or do not legitimate someone’s blame, the injured one is even more disempowered than had she remained silent. In cases where the injured one does not know how to say no to an offender (Ann as a child) or is unable to articulate hurt, especially in those cases in which the perpetrator does not stop the offense or does not feel morally responsible, it is doubly important for the Christian community to stand with and advocate for the injured one.

Christians who walk alongside the injured should respect their psychological and spiritual healing process, exercising patience. While the disciples may have needed forty days to mourn and adjust to the loss of the earthly Jesus before his ascension, some who suffer injury may need forty years to mourn and adjust to all they lost at the hands of those who did violence to them.⁴³ To assist in the process of mourning, the church can and must provide spiritual and emotional space for lament within the larger worshiping life of congregations. At the same time, we should recognize that psychological considerations can at times be used as an excuse by injured ones to avoid the necessary pain of the healing process or to rationalize “not forgiving.” As companions of the injured, the Christian community also has a role in nurturing their disposition toward forgiveness.

Accompanying those who have injured others. The Christian community also has a responsibility to accompany sinners. On the one hand, this means confronting those who injure others, making clear the wrongness of their acts in relation to God’s intentions for human life. This means

42. Gudorf, *Victimization*, 93.

43. Rolheiser implies this in his description, *The Holy Longing*, 150-153. In this chapter he counsels patience in dealing with anger and loss, but also says that there is time for those who have experienced loss to move beyond the “40 days.”

specifically naming such acts, not simply speaking in abstractions, which is tempting to do when sexual sins are involved. Theological ethicist Stanley Hauerwas has emphasized the importance of acknowledging sin before others: "We are seldom in a position to know the truth about our sin until we make our lives available to others in such a way that we may be taught the truth about ourselves."⁴⁴

On the other hand, this means making space for repentant offenders to experience transformation through the renewing power of human and divine forgiveness and acceptance. If the ones they have injured cannot forgive them, are not ready to hear their genuine confession and observe their repentance, or are no longer living, other members of the church can receive their confession, thereby allowing the injurer to experience God's forgiveness through the congregation's or its representatives' own accepting love. In Christian perspective it is not the case that only an injured one can forgive an offender.⁴⁵ The grace of God and God's church are not held hostage by the inability of injured ones to forgive repentant offenders.

In the act of acknowledging sin, offenders must also deal with shame. But theirs is an appropriate shame. The church is responsible to help monitor the behaviors of abusers as well as to help reestablish relationships of trust with the Christian community that have been shamefully betrayed. Linking Christian discipline and forgiveness is assumed in the reconciling process outlined in Matthew 18. While church discipline has far too often been practiced in judgmental rather than forgiving ways, causing many who have experienced it this way to abandon church discipline altogether, there are also hope-filled accounts of Christian transformation through responsible admonishment, repentance, and forgiveness.⁴⁶

44. Stanley Hauerwas, "Why Truthfulness Requires Forgiveness: A Commencement Address for Graduates of a College of the Church of the Second Chance," (unpublished manuscript of address given at Goshen College, Goshen, Ind., April 1992; copy in the Mennonite Historical Library there), 11.

45. Here I differ from those who assert that "only victims have the right to confer forgiveness on their abusers."—Christopher Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 264. I base this understanding partly on the image of the church as the body of Christ on earth. The church has been given the responsibility to bind and loose, as representatives of God offering forgiveness—but not lightly—to the repentant, especially in cases where it is impossible for victims or survivors of abuse to offer it to the offender directly, as when the victim has not been able to take steps toward forgiveness or is now dead.

46. Experience with sexual abuse of church leaders in the Mennonite Church led to a critique of the reconciling process listed in Matthew 18. Because of the fact that women, children, and the elderly who have been targets of abuse usually had much less social, economic, and institutional power than those who abused them, it seemed uncaring and unjust to expect them to face their abuser(s) alone as Matthew 18 recommends as a first step in the reconciling process. One corrective was to move immediately to involve others from the church in confronting abusers. Another was to protect the names of those abused

When a congregation or denomination is faced specifically with sexual sin and shame, the group and its leaders may need to address their own attitudes toward sexuality, bodies, gender relations, and privacy as they seek to foster God's saving work in the community. McClintock points out that there are, in fact, humorless, controlling, "shame-bound congregations" who are not well-prepared to be healing communities and need to address their own underlying beliefs and systemic practices before they can be good companions with either abusers or the abused.⁴⁷

Perhaps most important, the church has a *proactive* role in teaching and forming its members in living responsibly so that healing and forgiveness are less frequently necessary.⁴⁸ This means that church leaders must be comfortable with their own sexuality and be educated in both theological and cultural matters dealing with sex and sexuality.

In summary, for the Christian church to have a significant role in the grace of healing and forgiveness for those perpetrating or suffering from sexual sins or other injuries, it cannot silently condone the actions of offenders or abandon those who are injured. To accompany them well the church will need to press against strong cultural currents rooted in the value of individual freedom. Church leaders should expect such reactions as "Who are you to tell me what to think or do?" "Ethics are a private matter." "Don't meddle with my life." "You're a sinner too."

Mennonites have a strong heritage that values Christian community and ethical living. That heritage includes an understanding and practice of church that includes not only preaching, the administration of sacraments, and missionary love, but also mutual admonition and loving service to one another for the sake of Christ and the new world he envisioned. However, these dimensions of church cannot and will not remain alive in this cultural context without explicit leadership and care.

The Christian church is a holy church, not because the institution or its members never sin—indeed, only an ideal, ahistorical, disembodied church would never sin. We should not therefore expect to see a church "without spot or wrinkle." The church is holy because God has given to the church the ongoing gift of the Holy Spirit—God's own presence—who continues to draw us toward holiness. The fruits of the Spirit mark a community that, even when it fails in some respects and situations—

from public awareness when indicated, especially in sexually shame-based cultures and congregations where exposure could result in further shaming and hurt to the injured ones.

47. McClintock, *Sexual Shame*, 123-124.

48. Karen A. McClintock's *Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders* (Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2004) is one example among others that takes this approach.

including its practice of discipline—still retains the vision and power to seek justice, heal the brokenhearted, and forgive sin, and it is doing so.⁴⁹

The divine grace and human practice of offering restorative justice for both the injured and the injurers is an antidote to the fear and mistrust that pervade relationships and communities seared by moral injury, including sexual sins. Empowered by God, Christians can tell friends and neighbors the truth of their lives, a precursor to saving work. For, as Stanley Hauerwas warned, unless we humans are able to tell one another the truth, “we are condemned to live in a world of violence and destruction.” But Christians can live with hope and joy even in that kind of world. We can do so because as a people we have been constituted by the practices of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. “These practices make truth possible, and with truth emerges the seed for peace among women and men on earth.”⁵⁰

49. Mennonite Church responses from the 1970s to 2015 to John H. Yoder’s sexual abuses are one example of serious, flawed, painful, and healing attempts at restorative justice. For a provocative Mennonite discussion within an ecumenical context of the church as “holy” and whether the church as an institution might be able to repent for its acts in previous centuries, see Jeremy Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts* (London: T&T Clark International, 2011).

50. Hauerwas, “Why Truthfulness Requires Forgiveness,” 20.

Anabaptist Re-Vision: On John Howard Yoder's Misrecognized Sexual Politics

JAMIE PITTS*

Abstract: This essay explores how John Howard Yoder's victims and others could have perceived his abusive sexual politics as a legitimate function of his ministry. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "misrecognition" is used to show how cultural symbols can distract attention from oppressive domination. Yoder's writings on singleness and his comments to his victims are reviewed in order to suggest that their effectiveness derived from his ability to wield the symbols of positional authority, technical prowess, and socio-political radicalness. Deployment of these symbols would have provided compelling evidence of the legitimacy of his sexual politics. Understanding how Yoder's persuasion worked helps us to avoid its repetition. In doing so it contributes to a feminist "re-visioning" of Anabaptist-Mennonite theology.

In his essay "The Anabaptist Vision," published in 1944, Harold Bender largely construed "vision" as a matter of purpose and planning. "Anabaptism," he contended, "not only had clearly defined goals but also an action program of definiteness and power."¹ This program is "the great vision that shaped [the first Anabaptists'] course in history," a vision Bender famously summarized in terms of discipleship, the church as voluntary community, and the ethic of love and nonresistance. Although he admitted that "the Anabaptist vision was not a detailed blueprint for the reconstruction of human society," he insisted that the Anabaptists did set out to construct God's kingdom on earth, just as Jesus intended.² The Anabaptists, in other words, were right that Jesus' was not "a heavenly vision," but rather³ a vision of earthly disciples empowered by grace to live as he did.

With the possible exception of the phrase "heavenly vision," Bender did not reference the ocular meaning of "vision" in his text. Vision as

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1. Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1944), 5.

2. *Ibid.*, 35-36.

3. Since Bender says Jesus' vision was not "only a heavenly vision," the "rather" in the quotation could be changed to an "also." I use "rather" because he places his definition of "a heavenly vision" as something that would merely "keep His followers in tension until the last great day" in contrast with a vision of discipleship in the here and now.

metaphor for insight and imagination holds sway here, and the particular imagination in view is a highly pragmatic one. What the Anabaptists imagined, they did. Their vision was their reality, even if it got them killed. This closest of relationships between seeing and doing was, again, modeled on Jesus' vision, which was expressed in the "original New Testament church," the same church Anabaptists sought to "recreate without compromise."⁴

If Anabaptism achieves the elusive unity of *theoria* and *praxis*, then its seeing may be judged in light of its doing and vice versa. In this spirit, Dorothy Yoder Nyce, writing on the fiftieth anniversary of "The Anabaptist Vision," in 1994, questioned the viability of the Anabaptist vision of Bender and his milieu in light of its failure to challenge patriarchal order. Yoder Nyce argued that "as long as patriarchy was dominant and unchallenged, wholeness of vision was impossible—for women or men."⁵ She illustrated this point by cataloguing the ways that "Bender's 'Vision' was not equipped to counter the established [patriarchal] social order": it did not offer a hermeneutic that could "reconstruct" biblical texts sanctioning the silencing and subordination of women; it did not redefine nonconformity to distance it from efforts to control women through restricted dress or head coverings; it did not disassociate atonement, suffering, or discipleship from the use of those doctrines by men to justify their abuse of women.⁶ Unwholesome vision, indeed.

Yoder Nyce attended to the impossible wholeness of patriarchal vision in order to call for the "re-vision" that "is sacred work for each generation."⁷ This re-vision seeks an "integrity" of vision in which male hierarchy is discerned and resisted.⁸ In other words, integrated, whole vision sees and makes real a community of equals. Such re-vision, she imagined, would constitute "a re-formation break as bold as that from

4. *Ibid.*, 14.

5. Yoder Nyce, "The Anabaptist Vision: Was It Visionary Enough for Women?," *Conrad Grebel Review* 12, no. 3 (Fall 1994), 309.

6. *Ibid.*, 311-314, 316-319. In case this argument seems overly tendentious, it should be noted that Yoder Nyce sees Bender's "Vision" as "useful, in fact quite essential for a point in time. It focused and summarized central beliefs that needed ownership by a people who could benefit from a keener sense of identity. These beliefs were valid and a faithful expression of what had distinguished their Anabaptist forebears" (309). In case the argument seems anachronistic, it should also be noted that her "judgment" of the inadequacy of the "Vision" "is less a statement about Bender than about his context and the fifty years since then." Her evaluation is drawn from her own and other Mennonite women's experience growing up in a world in which the "Vision" was highly influential.

7. *Ibid.*, 310.

8. *Ibid.*, 312.

Catholicism" and is "ours to claim and join if we will choose to be faithful to Jesus the Christ."⁹ Yoder Nyce's Anabaptist re-vision, like Bender's vision, was modeled on Jesus' vision. What she saw that Bender and his generation did not is "how radically Jesus validated women who denounced social barriers in speech and action." Insofar as Anabaptist communities today come to see women with Jesus, they abandon patriarchal stratification and embrace egalitarian community.

Nevertheless, as Yoder Nyce wrote, "Mennonite men have not been radical." Anabaptist-Mennonite men have not gone back to the root of faith, the women-affirming Jesus Christ,¹⁰ and they have not pushed for a thorough break from patriarchal practice. They do not have Anabaptist re-vision. Allowing for rhetorical flourish—some Anabaptist-Mennonite men have likely been radical in the sense described—Yoder Nyce's judgment continues to urge the re-vision of male Anabaptist vision along feminist lines. If the re-vision is to be whole, then it must be shared by the whole church, men as well as women.

Twenty years after Yoder Nyce's initial re-vision casting, few male Anabaptist-Mennonite theologians have allowed our vision to be significantly re-visioned by feminism.¹¹ John Howard Yoder, the primary inheritor of Bender's vision,¹² has remained the public face of Anabaptist-Mennonite theology during that time. His relationship to

9. *Ibid.*, 317.

10. Based on the relative lack of references to 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12 in the writings of Menno Simons, Dirk Phillips, and in the *Martyrs Mirror*, Yoder Nyce also suggests that early Anabaptist women would have seen "imposed silence" as "incongruent" (311)—presumably as incongruent from their normal practice of vocal participation in the church. In this case, Anabaptist re-vision would also be a radical return to sixteenth-century Anabaptist roots. Yoder Nyce is right that there were important egalitarian tendencies in early Anabaptism that can be lifted up today. The reality, however, was complex and patriarchy strong. See C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, "Introduction," in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*, ed. Snyder and Huebert Hecht (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 8-12.

11. Examples of male Mennonite theologians interacting with feminism include Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, History, Constructive* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 80-84; Ben C. Ollenburger, "Is God the Friend of Slaves and Wives?," in *Perspectives on Feminist Hermeneutics*, ed. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Willard Swartley (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1987), 97-112; and Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press Press, 1983), 152-191.

12. Although it is true that Yoder distanced himself from Bender, it was because he saw the latter's institution-building as a betrayal of the Anabaptist vision. See Yoder, "Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality," in *Consultation on Anabaptist Mennonite Theology*, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno, Calif.: The Council of Mennonite Seminaries, 1970), 1-46; Albert N. Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1998), 450-471.

feminism is problematic, to say the least. Until recently, when new attention to the non-radicalness of Yoder's personal life has forced the issue, male scholars of Yoder's work, such as myself, have mostly avoided explicit, sustained reflection on feminist perspectives and concerns.¹³ Our vision did not include Yoder Nyce's judgment of Mennonite men, and Mennonite women and the whole church have suffered as a result. Our vision must be re-visioned.

This essay contributes to such a re-visioning of an Anabaptist vision that has been attenuated because it was attuned to patriarchal order. Its focus is on John Howard Yoder's theological vision and its relationship to his abusive sexual behavior. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "misrecognition" to provide a theoretical framework for Yoder Nyce's reflections on the dis-integration of Anabaptist vision, I argue that certain features of Yoder's life and work can, when taken together, be conceived of as dis-integrating. That is, it is not just Yoder's sexual violence that produces ecclesial and personal rupture, but also aspects of his theological vision as seen in light of that violence. In Yoder's case, abusive behavior and theological vision coalesce as a problematic "sexual politics" whose features must be accounted for so that their ongoing force may be resisted and recurrence avoided. Here I am particularly concerned to describe the *modus operandi* of Yoder's sexual politics as deploying socially legitimated "symbols" to abuse, harass, and silence women: his positional and personal intellectual authority; accepted biblical, theological, and historical methods of argumentation; and, especially, the claim to be "radical." Yoder was able, consciously or not, to use these symbols to distract from his dis-integrating violence. Using the terms I develop below, Yoder caused some of his victims, and perhaps himself, to misrecognize his violence as a legitimate form of sexual politics.

THEORIZING THE DIS-INTEGRATION OF THE ANABAPTIST VISION: MISRECOGNITION

As noted above, Dorothy Yoder Nyce has described how Bender's "Anabaptist Vision"—which she treats as a synecdoche for the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite vision of the mid-twentieth century—excluded antagonism to patriarchy and so failed to attain "wholeness of vision."

13. See the comments on Yoder scholarship by Ruth E. Krall, *The Elephants in God's Living Room, Volume Three: The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder, Collected Essays* (N.p.: Enduring Space, 2013), 87, 101. This book is available as a download at <http://ruthkrall.com/downloadable-books/volume-three-the-mennonite-church-and-john-howard-yoder-collected-essays/>.

She went on to recommend a "re-vision" in which "integrity" is brought to Anabaptist vision by allying it to resistance to masculine domination.

In formal terms, Yoder Nyce's "re-vision" is as pragmatic as Bender's "Vision": they both understand vision as a mode of simultaneous seeing and doing. For Bender, the original Anabaptists' practical attempts to construct Christ's kingdom on earth were internal to their discerning the shape of that kingdom in Scripture and through Spirit. Seeing and doing were two sides of the same coin, of the same vision. Similarly, for Yoder Nyce, Anabaptist re-vision sees patriarchy, judges it, and works to overcome it in the same motion. What feminist re-vision sees that Bender's vision does not, according to Yoder Nyce, is how that vision's acceptance of patriarchy tears asunder the church, and especially women in the church. The patriarchal church is a fractured, fragmenting church. Re-vision is needed to make it whole.

I propose that it will be helpful for this re-vision to reflect on the specific operations through which Anabaptist vision has overlooked patriarchy, how its sight has habitually and systematically failed to take in the features of the patriarchal order that are so obviously "in plain sight" to feminists.¹⁴ Quite simply, understanding those operations may supply re-visionaries with conceptual tools useful for their re-visioning. Knowing precisely how Anabaptist vision ignores patriarchy may inform feminist tactics of bringing patriarchy into Anabaptist sight.

Pierre Bourdieu, a twentieth-century French sociologist, has developed a set of conceptual tools that helpfully identify the operations of social domination.¹⁵ Among those tools is a theory of social reproduction that aims to demonstrate how dominant power-holders are

14. My language here is influenced by the concept of "unseeing" from China Miéville's novel *The City and the City* (London: Macmillan, 2009). "Unseeing" might be defined as a kind of habitual, systematic not noticing of present aspects of a physical or symbolic landscape. As habitual, unseeing has both reflexive and intentional dimensions. As systematic, unseeing works on relatively stable principles; it is patterned, not random. In *The City and the City*, one geographical region is divided into two city-states solely by enforced unseeing practices.

15. I summarize Bourdieu's central concepts throughout my book *Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder's Sociological Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2013). See chapter 2 on social reproduction and chapter 3 on symbolic violence. Gender was an important analytical locus for much of Bourdieu's work, one he treated at length in the essay *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002). His thought has been engaged extensively by feminists, e.g., in *Feminism after Bourdieu*, ed. Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Bridget Fowler, "Reading Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination*: Towards an Intersectional Analysis of Gender, Culture and Class," *Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3-4 (2003), 468-494; Beate Kraus, "Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 6 (2006), 119-134.

able to maintain their hegemony through changing times and in the face of challengers. Key to his view of reproduction is the concept of “symbolic violence,” which illuminates how those in power use symbolic resources to inculcate widespread assent to their dominance as natural, legitimate, and beneficent. Official histories, public art and architecture, the “common sense” reason and language generated by school, church, and media—all are symbolic resources, forms of capital, means of the reproduction of hegemony.¹⁶ Although they are deeply implicated in material forms of life, including material forms of capital, they are “symbolic” in that they are formed as normative modes of representation and reasoning irreducible to the material.

The successful deployment of this symbolic capital by the dominant, according to Bourdieu, is an act of violence in that it causes agents—dominant and dominated alike—to misrecognize social order in the terms produced by the dominant.¹⁷ To misrecognize is to have dominant vision, to see reality with the eyes of those whose interests the vision serves. Misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) is a partial, unwholesome, dis-integrated way of seeing that furthers social fragmentation and stratification by overlooking the harm it does.

Misrecognition is a helpful conceptual tool for theorizing the dominant Anabaptist vision—for bringing its dominating operations into view—because it can show how the deployment of symbols widely recognized as legitimate in a Mennonite context committed to radical Christian peacemaking can sometimes serve to reinforce and reproduce violence. My suggestion is that the legitimizing recognition of Yoder’s vision as *radical* and *authoritative* served to direct attention away from his abusive sexual politics.

The point is not that Yoder’s vision was, in fact, hopelessly conservative and unreliable. After all, Yoder offered compelling

16. Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” trans. Richard Nice in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Robinson (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258. See also Pitts, *Principalities and Powers*, 20-22.

17. It is important to state at the outset that Bourdieu repudiates a “conspiracy theoretical” view of the world, in which the dominant are viewed as conniving power monopolizers. Bourdieu’s sociology is meant, rather, to show how the dominant are socially formed to reproduce their domination, even when they consciously act against it. Likewise, the dominated are formed to contribute to their own domination, often in spite of their best efforts. This perspective is not meant to exculpate the dominant, blame the dominated, or cast society as a grimly deterministic cycle of domination. Bourdieu hopes that realistic sociological description can give agents tools to discover “margins of freedom” from which domination might be undermined. See Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 234-236, and Pitts, *Principalities and Powers*, 50-54.

theological challenges to the hegemonies of nation-state, militarism, and Christendom. He did not, however, compellingly challenge patriarchy, at least in the radical way described by Yoder Nyce. Furthermore, as many feminists have pointed out, the entwinement of patriarchy with other dominant social forms—such as the nation-state, militarism, and Christendom—means that gender analysis must be brought to bear on those other forms.¹⁸

Yoder's mostly gender-blind analysis often overlooks the gendered nature of socio-political domination. At those times it misrecognizes the dominant order as uninvolved in the exploitation of women. When it does attend to the gendered character of domination, as in the case presently under examination, it misrecognizes the mode of this exploitation with disastrous consequences. Yoder's Anabaptist vision was partial, fractured, and fragmenting. It needs to be re-visioned.

YODER'S SEXUAL POLITICS

What were whispered rumors about John Howard Yoder's sexual misconduct are now matters of public discussion.¹⁹ As the character of his misconduct has become more widely known, debates have opened over how to relate Yoder's life and work. Some theologians suggest that separation between his life and work is possible; others argue that the work should at least be examined in light of the life. The present essay takes the second position, for reasons I have explained elsewhere.²⁰ In brief, I agree with Mennonite theologian and former mental health clinician Ruth Krall that we cannot answer the question of how to use Yoder's work until we look "to see if, where and how his theology has been stunted, twisted, misshapen, or otherwise damaged by his long-

18. Mennonite feminist theologians have raised this issue for many years. For example: Mary Anne Hildebrand, "Domestic Violence: A Challenge to Mennonite Faith and Peace Theology," *Conrad Grebel Review* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1992), 73-80; Gayle Gerber Koontz, "Freedom, Discipleship, and Theological Reflection," in *Freedom and Discipleship: Liberation Theology in an Anabaptist Perspective*, ed. Daniel S. Schipani (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989), 172-173; Gerber Koontz, "Peace Theology and Patriarchy: The Trajectory of Scripture and Feminist Conviction," in *Essays on Peace Theology and Witness*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1988), 154-178; Elizabeth G. Yoder, ed., *Peace Theology and Violence against Women* (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1992).

19. Although the rumors have surfaced before and some details were published in the *Elkhart Truth* in 1992, the allegations have not been the subject of sustained public discussion until recently. For a history of the discussion, see Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 71-86.

20. See my blog post "Doing Better: Toward a Post-Yoderian Theology," *Practicing Reconciliation*, Jan. 21, 2014, <http://www.ams.edu/publishing/2014/01/Doing-Better-Toward-a-Post-Yoderian-Theology.cfm>.

term management of his personal life.”²¹ “To do this work,” she goes on to say, “scholars need to revisit his personal life in the decades in which he was creating his mature body of [intellectual] work.” This essay, accordingly, opens critical questions on Yoder’s theological vision by tracing how it was intertwined with his sexual politics. In particular, I identify various connections among the published testimonies of Yoder’s victims, his stature as an ecclesially authorized Christian theologian, his (largely unpublished) writings on singleness, and his published work.

In the fourth article of a five-part series on Yoder’s misconduct published in July 1992, Tom Price of *The Elkhart Truth* newspaper quoted a source named as “Tina,” now identified as Carolyn Holderread Heggen.²² Yoder touched Heggen inappropriately during their first encounter and he proceeded to write her a series of letters seeking her theological opinions. Eventually those letters included sexually explicit suggestions. Heggen describes Yoder’s strategy as “intellectual seduction”: “to have John Howard Yoder acting like my ideas were profound and significant—it was real heady stuff.” Further, she describes him as offering a theological justification for his actions. “One of the lines he used on a number of women I’ve met,” Heggen says, “is ‘We are the cutting edge. We are developing some models for the church. We are part of this grand, noble experiment. The Christian Church will be indebted to us for years to come.’”

Another of Price’s sources, identified as “Clara,” reports that in addition to “inappropriate hugs” and stalking behavior, Yoder would send her manuscripts on singleness for her commentary. Two of Yoder’s writings on singleness are currently available online: “Singleness in Ethical and Pastoral Perspective,” from 1973-1974, and “Single Dignity,” from 1976.²³ In the first of these Yoder defended singleness as “the first normal state for every Christian” and then identified several changes the

21. Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 211.

22. For the following see Price, “Theologian Accused: Women Report Instances of Inappropriate Conduct” and “Yoder’s Actions Framed in Writings,” *Elkhart Truth* (Elkhart, Ind.), July 13 and 14, 1992. The entire five-part series and a preceding overview article are available in Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 379-402. Heggen was named as the source “Tina” in Mark Oppenheimer, “A Theologian’s Influence, and Stained Past, Live On,” *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/12/us/john-howard-yoders-dark-past-and-influence-lives-on-for-mennonites.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

23. These manuscripts are available in the John Howard Yoder Digital Collection as separate files and as one document produced in 1980. For the latter see <http://replica.palni.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15705coll18/id/2483>. References to these manuscripts are in the body of the essay. Ruth Krall mentions various other related manuscripts in her book, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 195-196, 200-203.

church would need to undergo if that claim were to be accepted. Among these changes is a move "to recreate extended family structures in which the single person can be at home socially, economically, in family prayer and household chores."²⁴ These structures might involve single-sex or mixed housing communities, of singles only or of singles with married couples. Accepting the presence of single persons in the church and creating communities in which they can thrive entails, in Yoder's view, freedom "from the tyranny of assuming that relations between two persons must always be seen as potential courtship."²⁵ A change commensurate with this shift is "a new liberty for the expression of affection and moral support between persons," a liberty that includes "spiritual intimacy and physical touching" between married and unmarried persons.

This vision is given a biblical basis in "Single Dignity." Taking up Jesus' line about "adultery of the heart" (Matthew 5:28), Yoder contended that Jesus' redefinition of women as sisters and daughters within the community of disciples creates the possibility of "non-erotic," non-lustful relationships between men and women. According to Yoder's interpretation, men can look at women without lust because they recognize them as sisters in Christ, as members of the same family, and so as "off limits" from erotic interaction. In short, Christ expands the incest taboo to all disciples, thereby eliminating lust. Yoder proposes that

if we could discover the dynamic of freedom with which Jesus could deal with any kind of woman . . . as a sister without erotic dimensions, then we might be far more able to give to our single sisters and brothers moral and social support including residential closeness [and] the affirmations of touch and time together. . . .²⁶

In a long memo from 1974 addressed to "sisters-in-faith," Yoder elaborated on the pastoral nature of his concern.²⁷ Since men and women (though he mostly writes about women) have natural sexual urges, it is better not to repress those urges. Instead of demanding that a single woman "shrivel the expression of her womanliness," he suggested that we ought to encourage her to "redistribute it by sharing it with other men (uncle, brother, colleague, nephew, teacher, pupil)." Such redistribution can be achieved through the affectional and physical

24. *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

25. *Ibid.*, 7.

26. Yoder, "Single Dignity," 3, 5.

27. The memo, titled "Call to Aid," is reproduced in Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 200-201.

exchanges described in his singleness papers, exchanges that at least in theory were to stop short of genital touching.²⁸

In what follows I represent Yoder's oral and written comments to his victims, as reported by them and as seen in his writings on singleness, as acts of symbolic violence that operated through the logic of misrecognition.²⁹ His comments worked by drawing from a fund of highly valued symbolic capital, capital that could be exchanged for the recognition of those comments as legitimate and authorized. This exchange was an act of violence, I contend, because it caused some of Yoder's victims and perhaps others to accept the legitimacy of Yoder's sexual politics when, in fact, those politics conflicted with the terms of his authorization.

Yoder was authorized by the church to be a radical Christian intellectual, and he used that authorization for over two decades to legitimate his violent sexual politics.³⁰ By doing so, Yoder called into question his credentials as a radical Christian intellectual as such. Insofar as anyone aware of his sexual politics—his victims, readers of his essays on the topic, or even he himself—accepted his credentials without question, they became captive to the logic of misrecognition, blinded to the ways in which his sexual politics undermined his credentials.

This exercise of symbolic violence, I suggest, worked via the deployment of three sets or clusters of symbolic capital: symbols related to his positional and personal authority; symbols related to his

28. Genitals are presumably not involved because of the non-erotic character of the exchanges. Moreover, Yoder equates sexual intercourse with marriage in his paper "When is a Marriage Not a Marriage?" (1974), which is also available from the Digital Collection: <http://replica.palni.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15705coll18/id/2229>. If intercourse is marriage, then intimate touching between singles by definition does not include intercourse. That said, at some point it seems that Yoder either changed his mind about sexual intercourse or failed to follow his own guidelines. A June 2014 update from the Mennonite Church USA's John Howard Yoder Discernment Group stated that "there are documented reports of sexual violation by Yoder, including fondling and sexual intercourse." See <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/an-update-from-the-discernment-group-on-sexual-abuse/>.

29. Note that I identify Yoder's oral and written comments *to his victims* as acts of symbolic violence. Hypothetical reconstructions of Christian sexual ethics are not inherently violent; they become violent when interwoven with coercive touch and other abusive and harassing behavior.

30. I do not enter the debate here over whether or not Yoder "truly repented" before his death in 1997. There does seem to be consensus that Yoder was unrepentant during the two previous decades (the first complaint to the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries was made in 1976), during which time he repudiated numerous interventions. For discussion, see Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 102-103, 109, 157, 232-233. Krall gives the 1976 date on p. 195, though she suggests his behavior may have begun as early as 1965 (332).

authorized technical expertise as a biblical interpreter, theologian, and historian; and symbols related to his identification as "radical."

Authority Symbols

First are the symbols of Yoder's religious and intellectual authority as a Mennonite church leader and as an internationally recognized scholar. This authority legitimized his general access to the women he met in classrooms, churches, and at speaking engagements. He had access to them because his authority demanded it, even when his superiors knew of his propensity to abuse that authority and even when they tried to restrict his access.³¹ Heggen's testimony further indicates that Yoder's authority persuaded some of his victims to let him into their lives. Intellectual attention from Yoder was seen as "real heady stuff." By deploying his authority as a grooming tactic, Yoder played on previously inculcated habits of respect for religious and intellectual authorities. Those habits gained him personal access to specific women, women whose assent to his engagement was based on recognition of his authority as legitimate.

In truth, however, the legitimacy of his authority was based on a contradiction: his abusive behavior repeatedly undermined the *raison d'être* of the communities that conferred authority upon him. That *raison d'être* might be identified by its reflection in Yoder's writings, given that the church commissioned most of those writings.³² What did Yoder write about? In summary, he wrote about the true and false shape of radical Christian discipleship as discerned on biblical, theological, and historical grounds.³³ These terms might be analyzed further. Yoder defined "Christian discipleship" throughout his writings as a communal practice of conformity to the life and teachings of Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament. Christian discipleship is, on this account, "radical" in at least three ways: it goes back to its "root" (*radix*)—Jesus Christ as portrayed in the New Testament; it is a form of "extreme" and unswayable

31. On efforts to confront and restrain Yoder, see Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 203-204, 218-237, and the essay by Rachel Waltner Goossen published elsewhere in this issue.

32. Many, perhaps most, of Yoder's published writings have a note about their origins in some ecclesial commission or another. Yoder outlined his conception of the relationship between the theologian and the church in "Walk and Word: The Alternatives to Methodologism," *A Pacifist Way of Knowing: John Howard Yoder's Nonviolent Epistemology*, ed. Christian E. Early and Ted G. Grimsrud (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2010), 81-97; and "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood: A Protestant Perspective," *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 15-45.

33. I generalize here from extensive research in Yoder's *oeuvre*. See chapter 4 of my *Principalities and Powers* for an account of his theological method.

commitment, of steadfast faith; and it repudiates significant areas of the socio-political status quo as vicious scenes of bondage and violence. This vision of radical Christian discipleship was based on three primary sources: biblical exegesis that described Jesus' life and teachings and the early church's conformity to them; theological arguments that clarified Jesus' logical coherence and normative force; and a historiography that demonstrated how Jesus has and has not been followed through time.

If the purpose of Yoder's writings was to articulate a vision of radical Christian discipleship vis-à-vis biblical, theological, and historical sources, then it is plausible that the institutions he worked for had similar purposes. But if that is the case, then Yoder's abusive behavior clearly contravened those purposes: it short-circuited a return to the Jesus who affirmed the personhood of women;³⁴ it demonstrated weak commitment to following after that Jesus; and it perpetuated the violence of the patriarchal status quo.

These conclusions are, perhaps, obvious, but they are important to name as evidence of the misrecognition that was at work in the collective recognition of Yoder's authority. Recognizing Yoder's authority required either ignorance of or blindness to the ways in which he persistently eroded the basis of that authority, that is, his personal integrity and the integrity of the church that authorized him.

Technical Symbols

The authorization of John Howard Yoder as a legitimate biblical interpreter, theologian, and historian brings us to the second cluster of symbols constitutive of his intellectual seduction. Yoder's intellectual seduction worked, when it worked, in part because his victims accepted the sources and methods he deployed as normative. Anyone familiar with Yoder's work will recognize the logic of his comments to his victims and of his writings on singleness. That logic is consistent with the logic he uses elsewhere. Yoder first identified the inadequacies of historical understandings of singleness and sexuality by comparing them with Scripture.³⁵ Jesus' life and teachings, as gleaned from biblical exegesis,

34. Yoder, "Single Dignity," 3.

35. In "Singleness in Ethical and Pastoral Perspective," Yoder counters the assumption of "modern western society" that "married life [is] the only proper way to be an adult human being" (1). He reviews five socio-cultural or religious paradigms that uphold marriage as normative (1-2). In "Single Dignity," it is "our mostly-married society" or "our western culture" that is in view, with its "fundamentally inadequate grasp of the entire realm of the bodily, the sexual, the animal in human nature" (1). He traces this inadequacy to two "non-Christian sources": body-denying Gnosticism, which entered Christianity via Augustinian Neo-Platonism, and body-fearing Paganism, which entered Christianity via

supply the core norm. That norm is then traced into the apostolic church—in this case to Paul's teaching on the priority of singleness—to reinforce its plausibility as an interpretation of Jesus' life and teachings and to illustrate its possible historical realization. Once the norm is established on biblical grounds, and its superiority over historical rivals secured, its implications for Christian discipleship are enumerated at length and with impressive logical rigor.

Heggen's report that Yoder told some of his victims that their presumptively "non-erotic" physical and emotional relationships were "cutting edge," that they were "developing some models for the church," and that they were "part of this grand, noble experiment" further links his justificatory reasoning to central theological moves he made elsewhere. For instance, near the beginning of his career he wrote in *The Christian Witness to the State* of the church as "the 'pilot' creating experimentally new ways of meeting social needs."³⁶ The church's ministry, he argued, is "one of constant inventive vision for the good of the larger society" (20). These themes are echoed in a late paper, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," that was first presented in 1992 and published in 1997.³⁷ As its title indicates, in that paper Yoder described how the social creativity of basic Christian practices, what he elsewhere describes as "sacraments,"³⁸ provides the substance of transformative Christian witness. With these examples in mind, it seems likely that Yoder understood his invitations to women to participate in a cutting-edge ecclesial experiment as in some way sacramental. They were invitations to put Jesus' precedent into present practice to transform church and world.³⁹

near Eastern and Germanic fertility religions. He sees both sources as problematizing the body as a force to be repressed.

36. Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1992 [1964]), 19.

37. Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," *For The Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 15-36.

38. See, e.g., Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael Cartwright (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1998), 359-373; and Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001).

39. To notice the formal similarities between, on the one hand, Yoder's comments to his victims and his writings on singleness and, on the other hand, his celebrated published writings is not to say that the logic of the former is always good logic. For instance, it is not clear how "non-erotic" relating will relieve the tension of repressed sexual desire. One can also take issue with Yoder's historical thesis about sexual repression. Michel Foucault, for instance, has written of the way the "repressive hypothesis" gets the history wrong and, in doing so, fails to see its own participation in the representation of sex as a "secret" that must be unlocked through proliferating sexual discourses and political attempts to shape and control sexuality (sometimes precisely by "liberating" it). Foucault thinks sex began to

Given the formal similarity of these invitations to the public invitations to radical Christian discipleship that he offered the entire church in his speeches and writings, it is possible to see how he and his victims could have seen his private invitations as authorized and so legitimate. It is possible to see, too, how those invitations would have been difficult to resist or recognized as illegitimate, even if their intent ran counter to the purposes for which Yoder was authorized to offer invitations to discipleship. Likewise, the formal similarities between Yoder's writings on singleness and his other, authorized writings suggest the difficulty many readers would have in separating the legitimate from the illegitimate. His private intellectual seduction was powerful and effective precisely because it deployed the authorized symbols of his public intellectual ministry.

Political Symbols: Yoder as "Radical"

In his comments to his victims and in his writings on singleness, Yoder used a specific kind of social and political language to portray the illicit emotional and physical relations he sought. That language might be summarized as the language of "socio-political radicalness," which represents the third and final symbolic cluster of Yoder's intellectual seduction. We have just reviewed Heggen's report that Yoder spoke to victims about being on the "cutting edge," of developing new ecclesial models, and of grand, noble experiments. In his manuscripts on singleness, as summarized above, he wrote of his proposed relationships as participating in a "freedom from tyranny," "new liberty," and "dynamic of freedom," all made possible by Jesus. This is the language of socio-political radicalness, of a definitive break from status quo bondage into a new beneficent order. Yoder even heightened the radical flavor of his position by claiming in his 1974 paper on singleness that "we may have been taught by 'the youth culture'" about appropriate, non-erotic physical intimacy between marrieds and singles.⁴⁰ His vision is radical, therefore, not only on biblical and theological grounds, but also by association with the radical sexual revolutionaries of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This sexual radicalness was not merely theoretical: Stanley Hauerwas has observed that Yoder's sexual "experiments"

be represented in this way in the eighteenth century. See his *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990).

40. Yoder, "Singleness in Ethical and Pastoral Perspective," 7.

began in the 1960s and were likely influenced by the sexually experimental ethos of that era.⁴¹

The titles of Yoder's two major publications in the early 1970s play up his ties to the spirit of those times: *The Original Revolution* and *The Politics of Jesus*.⁴² Moreover, at the beginning of the latter volume, Yoder invoked the "young 'rebels'" who claim Jesus as a countercultural icon, asking if their "half-spoofing exaggeration" might actually represent a "biblical truth" long hidden from Christian ethicists.⁴³ That truth, which *The Politics of Jesus* sets out to confirm, is that the New Testament depicts Jesus as a "model of radical political action." It seems, however, that Yoder's sympathies with the young rebels' radical Jesus extended beyond the specific economic and political concerns of *The Politics of Jesus* to the interpersonal politics explored in his writings on singleness and in his private invitations to women.

Alongside the previously examined depiction of ordinary Christian sacramental practice as socially transformative, these linguistic maneuvers firmly associated Yoder's vision with radical socio-politics. Yoder again and again showed how steadfast faith in Jesus Christ demanded disentanglement from the dominant order. At key points he expressed sympathy with movements with strong radical credentials, such as 1960s "youth culture" or the Latin American liberation theologians he occasionally engaged.⁴⁴ He wrote about a pacifistic, economically redistributive Jesus as the original revolutionary. His project was deeply invested in and with radical symbolism.

Although some of Yoder's writings may be justly imbued with this symbolism, the aura of radicalism that hung over his project may have abetted the misrecognition of his sexual politics. His authorized public persona as a cutting-edge, experimental Christian thinker provided weighty evidence in favor of accepting his sexual politics as legitimately radical and legitimately Christian, as a credible form of radical Christian

41. Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (London: SCM, 2010), 244. See Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 356, for commentary on Hauerwas's claims.

42. Yoder, *The Original Revolution* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1971); Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994 [1972]).

43. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 1-2.

44. On liberation theology see, e.g., Yoder, "Exodus and Exile: The Two Faces of Liberation," *Cross Currents* 23, no. 3 (Fall 1973), 297-309; Yoder, "The Wider Setting of 'Liberation Theology,'" *The Review of Politics* 52, no. 2 (Spring 1990), 285-296. Yoder's lectures in Latin America during the 1960s have been published as Yoder, *Revolutionary Christianity: The 1966 South America Lectures*, ed. Paul Martens et al. (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2011).

discipleship. In the misty haze of radicalism, sexual violence was misrecognized.⁴⁵

One of the paradoxes of Yoder's radicalism was that its transgressive political posture was based in a conserving return to the root sources of Christian faith. This alliance between a form of traditional Christianity and radical politics need not be incoherent; Yoder's biblical commitments to peace and economic justice indeed share much with some radical political currents. But regardless of its intellectual or political coherence, its reception as a plausible integration of radical politics and radical faith suggests that Yoder's vision was able to harness the symbols of radical return, radical commitment, and radical politics. This triple radicalism heavily endowed his vision with symbolic capital that could be converted into legitimating recognition. Recognized radicalism, in turn, was convertible with ever-greater positional authority and with an authorized interpretation of normative sources.

In other words, Yoder's authority depended on the fungibility of his radical credentials, his institutional credentials, and his technical credentials.⁴⁶ The merging of these three symbolic clusters sustained Yoder's legitimacy even when his actions again and again compromised his credibility. His ability to integrate powerful symbols into a widely recognized vision had dis-integrating effects on numerous women and the church as a whole. Yoder's vision must be re-visioned.

CONCLUSION

This contribution to Anabaptist re-vision has conceptualized John Howard Yoder's sexual politics as operating through the logic of misrecognition. As the theologian laureate of the Mennonite church, Yoder had considerable symbolic resources at his disposal, resources that legitimated his positional and personal authority as a biblical interpreter, theologian, historian, and socio-political radical. When those resources were deployed in, with, and under inappropriate seductive comments and touches, they would have been extremely difficult to recognize as illegitimate. But illegitimate they were, since the inappropriateness of the comments and touches violated the basis of their legitimacy. Legitimizing recognition of Yoder's sexual politics was misrecognition. Legitimacy was seen; delegitimizing abuse left unseen. Thus, the

45. Some feminists have seen the "sexual revolution" as inherently patriarchal. See, e.g., Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 122-124.

46. On capital conversion, see Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 252-254.

misrecognition of John Howard Yoder's sexual politics, in Dorothy Yoder Nyce's terms, had a dis-integrating effect on women and the church. As long as Yoder's vision is equated with the Anabaptist vision, the wholeness of the latter will remain impossible.

Anabaptist re-vision has a larger task than naming the operations of Yoder's sexual politics, even if that naming may aid resistance to contemporary misrecognitions of sexual violence. John Howard Yoder, of course, looms large in any account of the fate of the "Anabaptist Vision" of his mentor Harold Bender. But Dorothy Yoder Nyce's interest was in the inability of that larger vision to dispel patriarchy. Even if Yoder remains a primary point of re-visionary interest, Ruth Krall has maintained that attempts to understand him will need to include attempts to understand "the fault lines in his communities of reference."⁴⁷ A wider frame will be necessary to comprehend how American Mennonites have participated in and perpetuated the violence of patriarchal order, and to display Mennonite implication in the intersections of patriarchy with racial, sexual, class and other modes of domination. Within this frame, new work must be carried out in history, sociology, biblical studies, theology, and other disciplines, work that will both clarify the dominating operations of the past and preview the liberation to come. Some of this work has already been done, and waits to be engaged with the same widespread effort that has characterized the reception of John Howard Yoder's writings.⁴⁸ If male Mennonite theologians are going to provide counterevidence to Yoder Nyce's judgment that "Mennonite men have not been radical," then we have much of our own re-visionary work to do, at the same time as we renew forces to recruit, support, promote, and learn from women and other marginalized re-visionaries in our midst.

According to its dominant position in the dominant Anabaptist vision of the last few decades, John Howard Yoder's theological vision demands ongoing re-vision. Or, rather, Anabaptist re-vision demands critical feminist readings of Yoder's *oeuvre*. To quote Krall again, scholars should look "to see if, where and how his theology has been stunted,

47. Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 237.

48. For Mennonite feminist work see, in addition to previously mentioned resources, *inter alia*, the writings of Lois Barrett, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, Lydia Harder, Hannah Heinzekehr, Gayle Gerber Koontz, Stephanie Krehbiel, Dorothy Yoder Nyce, and Mary Schertz. The Winter 1992, Spring 1996, and Winter 2005 issues of *The Conrad Grebel Review* collect papers from Women Doing Theology conferences. Among historical resources, see especially *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*, ed. Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Steven D. Reschly (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002).

twisted, misshapen, or otherwise damaged by his long-term management of his personal life.”⁴⁹ In this essay, I have largely confined my gaze to those writings that bear directly on his sexual politics. Good work has already begun on his interpretation of the Pauline household codes.⁵⁰ Another likely candidate for re-vision is his general ecclesiology, which presumes a dialogue among equals but contains no specific provisions for empowering women to full participation after two millennia of silencing. Yoder’s rejection of women’s ordination, on the grounds that ascension to the top of an oppressive hierarchy is no liberation, actually resembles the reasoning of some pro-women’s ordination advocates.⁵¹ But their egalitarian visions address the requirement of intentional women’s empowerment. As Yoder Nyce suggests, the Anabaptist vision has not been equipped for this role. It is time that it became so equipped. It is time that it be re-visited, for the wholeness of the church and its women and men.

49. Krall, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder*, 211.

50. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 81-83; Nekeisha Alexis Baker, “Freedom of the Cross: John Howard Yoder and Womanist Theologies in Conversation,” in *Powers and Practices: Engaging the Work of John Howard Yoder*, ed. Jeremy M. Bergen and Anthony G. Siegrist (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2009), 83-98. Future work on this topic needs to follow Schüssler Fiorenza and pursue the troubling footnotes in which Yoder strongly implies he draws a distinction between the equal dignity of men and women (which he supports) and equal roles within the church (which, at least in 1972, he seemed to question). See Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 173-175, notes 25-31.

51. For Yoder’s position, see his *The Fullness of Christ: Paul’s Revolutionary Vision of Universal Ministry* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren, 1987), 50-54, and *Body Politics*, 60. For feminist cases for women’s ordination that reimagine church order, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), esp. 23-38; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 1983), 193-213; Ruether, *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985). Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 50-54, makes similar points but is more skeptical of ordination as such.

By What Criteria Does a “Grand, Noble Experiment” Fail? What the Case of John Howard Yoder Reveals about the Mennonite Church

PAUL MARTENS AND DAVID CRAMER*

Abstract: This essay argues that the attempts by the Mennonite Church to address Yoder’s problematic sexual explorations revealed and heightened at least three tensions internal to the Anabaptist tradition that affect its polity in very practical ways: 1) the tension between the “Anabaptist vision” and “Mennonite reality”; 2) the tension between church discipline and anti-Constantinian resistance to power; and 3) the tension between the Anabaptist desire to separate from sin and the need for continued dialogue in disagreement. After describing how these tensions are narrated in Yoder’s writing and manifested in the competing perspectives concerning his disciplining process, the essay argues that—even though the circumstances are radically different—the same tensions are present in the current discernment process devoted to same-sex marriage and LGBTQ inclusion in the church. In so doing, we clarify the implicit theo-logics appealed to by differing groups in the Mennonite Church in order to facilitate better understanding among those representing various perspectives in these often impassioned discussions.

John Howard Yoder was not a saint. This much is patently obvious given the revelations from the discernment group about his numerous sordid sexual activities.¹ But, while virtually all Mennonites condemn his abusive actions and remain mystified about the theological justifications he created to defend them, in this essay we argue that Yoder’s theological outlook heightened several internal tensions within the Mennonite Church that unwittingly and ironically affected its polity in very practical ways. Thus, if we are to learn from the case of John Howard Yoder, we cannot stop at simply condemning his actions; we must also face the deep-seated and still unresolved tensions in the Anabaptist tradition—as part of the broader believers church tradition—

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1. For our own attempt to come to grips with Yoder’s actions, see David Cramer, Jenny Howell, Paul Martens, and Jonathan Tran, “Theology and Misconduct: The Case of John Howard Yoder,” *The Christian Century* 131, no. 17 (Aug. 20, 2014), 20-23; and idem, “Scandalizing John Howard Yoder,” *The Other Journal* (July 7, 2014), online: bit.ly/jhyoder.

that surface in Yoder's thought and that are also manifested in contemporary Mennonite ecclesiology and its attempt to come to grips with the complexity of a Christian understanding of human sexuality.

To begin this process, we attend to three particular tensions within Yoder's thought that have generally been escalated by the occasionally overt but usually implicit (or even vestigial) assumption that Mennonites bear the burden of being the pure church, or, in Yoder's language, of being the church that is the "first fruits" of the kingdom of God. The three specific tensions that emerge out of this tradition are:

- 1) the tension between (a) the high normative standards of the Anabaptist vision (whether stated in the form of Harold S. Bender's "The Anabaptist Vision" or some other formally analogous description) and (b) the daily recognition that Mennonite reality falls short of this ideal;²
- 2) the tension between affirming (a) the power of the church community to exercise discipline and, at the same time, (b) the subversive anti-Constantinian resistance to the exercise of power; and
- 3) the tension between (a) the need for identification of, and separation from, sin and (b) the need to continue dialogue in disagreement.

Although the first of these issues—the tension between a high normative ideal and the actual practice of lived experience—has a long history and is familiar to those in the Mennonite world, many have come to see this tension as more acute and complex in the wake of the case of Yoder than it is usually understood to be. Tending to this tension, we suggest, leads to consideration of the further tensions, which are, at present, very pressing concerns for the Mennonite Church.

To make our arguments concrete, we demonstrate how these tensions are currently playing out in another discernment process within the Mennonite Church USA, namely, on whether or not to affirm non-celibate LGBTQ persons through ministry licensure and ordination. By describing the formal parallels between the tensions in Yoder's thought and the current tensions over same-sex marriage and LGBTQ inclusion, we hope to show the ways in which Mennonites have inherited the assumptions and tensions within their tradition, regardless of the "side"

2. We use the term "ideal" intentionally here, and our rationale will become clearer as our argument progresses. For Bender, Yoder, and many Mennonites, references to "The Anabaptist Vision" are, by their own definition, references to "the biblical vision" (and vice-versa). Not everyone makes this connection explicit, but it permeates Mennonite history to the extent that we will, on occasion, use "Anabaptist ideal" and "biblical ideal" interchangeably.

they are on in the current debates concerning sexuality, celibacy, and ordination. Our purpose, therefore, is not to criticize any particular position or party in these debates but rather simply to help clarify the theo-logics at play in order to better understand how these tensions arise and become entrenched.

"THE ANABAPTIST VISION AND MENNONITE REALITY' REVISITED" REVISITED

The tension between the ideal of the Anabaptist vision and the reality of Mennonite communities has been the subject of considerable debate for some time.³ In most cases, the distinction between normative vision and reality—where the former is always defined as "Anabaptist" and the latter is always defined as "Mennonite"—is a loaded one in which the former is superior and stands in judgment of the latter. On the other hand, some have criticized the Anabaptist vision itself for being deficient in some way.⁴ What are rarely recognized in this discussion, however, are the multiple ways in which the dissonance between vision and reality find expression. We would like to briefly address three.

Option 1: The Difference Is Sin

One way of describing the difference between the Anabaptist vision and Mennonite reality is that it names a failure to live up to the normative expression of the Christian life. Or, to rephrase, the gap between vision and reality could be thought of in terms of *sin*. Although some prominent ethicists like Stanley Hauerwas have sometimes described Mennonites as belonging to communities that faithfully exemplify Christian practices of nonviolence and forgiveness,⁵ anyone

3. Specifically, our subtitle alludes to John D. Roth's essay "Living Between the Times: 'The Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality' Revisited," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* [hereafter *MQR*] 69 (July 1995), 323-335, which was a direct response to John Howard Yoder's essay "Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality," *Consultation on Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology: Papers Read at the 1969 Aspen Conference*, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno, Calif.: Council of Mennonite Seminaries, 1970), 1-46. Yoder's essay, in turn, was a response to (among other things) Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision," *MQR* 18 (April 1944), 67-88.

4. The most notable example of this latter argument is Stephen F. Dintaman's influential essay "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision," *Conrad Grebel Review* 10 (1992), 205-208.

5. In his book *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), for example, Hauerwas writes, "I am often accused of romanticizing both Catholicism and Anabaptism, and no doubt that is a danger. But the reason I am so attracted to those traditions is that they have managed to keep some practices in place that provide resources for resistance against the loss of Christian presence in modernity. For that is the heart of the matter—namely, practices. Practices make the church the embodiment of Christ for the world" (67-68).

who grew up in a Mennonite community or participated in Mennonite church life recognizes that these communities are not exempt from pride, selfishness, envy, and various other personal vices—including manifold expressions of violence.⁶ This is the form of the tension that Maurice Martin sought to address pastorally in “The Pure Church: The Burden of Anabaptism,”⁷ and that John D. Roth identified in “Living Between the Times.” It frames many Mennonite sermons on a weekly basis. Mennonites have a hard time accepting identifications that they would rather ascribe to others; Mennonites do not generally refer to their church, for example, as made up of people who are *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously justified and sinners), a description roundly embraced in the Lutheran tradition. Rather, Mennonites prefer to speak of the church as “the new community of disciples,” “the new society established and sustained by the Holy Spirit,” and “the visible manifestation of Jesus Christ.”⁸

Arguably, however, the strong Mennonite emphasis on church discipline—rooted in Matthew 18:15-22 and appropriated in the sixteenth century through the *Schleitheim Confession*—demonstrates that this tension is so recognizably ever-present that the church has adopted a customary practice for addressing it. In the words of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, “Discipline is intended to liberate erring brothers and sisters from sin, to enable them to return to a right relationship with God, and to restore them to fellowship in the church” (Article 14). It appears that this sort of practice can work effectively to address most of the sorts of personal sins encountered on a regular basis.⁹ More extreme sins (e.g., murder or kidnapping) are usually

6. In this context, we adopt Yoder’s own definition of violence: “As soon as either verbal abuse or bodily coercion moves beyond that border line of loving enhancement of the dignity of persons, we are being violent. The extremes of the two dimensions are of course killing and the radical kind of insult which Jesus in Matthew 5 indicates is just as bad. I believe it is a Christian imperative always to respect the dignity of every person: I must never willingly or knowingly violate that dignity.”—John Howard Yoder, “Fuller Definition of ‘Violence,’” collected in the London Mennonite Centre, Highgate, London, March 28, 1973, p. 3.

7. Maurice Martin, “The Pure Church: The Burden of Anabaptism,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1983), 29-41.

8. These statements are drawn from *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1995), 39-41. To be fair, Article 9: The Church of Jesus Christ also recognizes that “the church is imperfect and thus in constant need of repentance” (39), even though this admission is given considerably less emphasis. Further, it should be noted that we use the *Confession of Faith* simply as illustrative in this argument, recognizing that its form, content, and role is variously understood among Mennonites. In the cases where we cite it, however, we believe it represents the normative theological convictions of a very significant number of Mennonites throughout history and in North America today.

9. In the course of this process, grace and forgiveness usually are introduced only after moral striving and failure. This ordering and its implicit emphasis has generated

addressed in federal or state disciplinary processes; but these governmental actions do not usually replace church discipline even if they complicate it.

What this way of articulating the tension generally presumes is that the church has a clear and uniform understanding of the normative vision that it is called to uphold and that the church has the same confident capability to identify what counts as sin. These presumptions, however, were called into question by Yoder, and it is this complication that made his disciplinary process so vexing and seemingly incomplete.

Option 2: The Difference Is Structural

A second way to describe the tension between the Anabaptist vision and Mennonite reality is to think of the dissonance in terms of ecclesial structures or sociological forms (i.e., that the sociological shape of the Mennonite Church, as a community, is profoundly different from that of the early Anabaptists).¹⁰ Although Yoder himself occasionally recognized the first expression of the tension sketched above,¹¹ it is this second, sociological expression of the tension that drives much of his critical and constructive agenda. Yoder himself noted this tension early in life—it yielded the derisory “The Cooking of the Anabaptist Goose” letter to his Concern Group in which the young Yoder contrasted modern Mennonite institutions, especially its colleges, with the “Spirit-led way of facing the world,”¹² and the later, more formal critique

considerable debate. In “The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision,” for example, Dintaman writes, “We have had little patience or compassion for human weakness and insecurity which drives people to hold tenaciously to false gods. We have often scorned people who weren’t ready to give up their nationalistic and materialistic attitudes. We have had little sensitivity to deeply wounded people who are trapped in deep holes of bondage and addiction. That is, I believe, why Anabaptist vision churches have tended not to grow. The Anabaptist vision only taught us how to minister to strong people who are in fundamental control of their lives. It left us frustrated and impotent when we met deeply troubled people who seemed incapable of change” (206).

10. We recognize that structures can be sinful. In this context, however, we are following Yoder’s lead and simply speaking about structural difference without valuation (except that implied between naming the difference between Anabaptism and denominational structures found in other expressions of Christianity, including but not limited to education, publication, and biblical interpretation). The question that Yoder suggests and leaves open is, however, precisely this: how does one know when sociological difference is merely difference and when it becomes sin?

11. See, for example, John Howard Yoder, “Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism,” *MQR* 29 (April 1955), 101-117. In describing Niebuhr’s theology, he discusses Niebuhr’s view that “there exists between finitude and transcendence a tension which provides occasion for sin” (103); later he reminds the reader of “Niebuhr’s real service to theology, and to pacifism, in making real the omnipresence of sin, even when mixed with the best of intentions” (117).

12. John H. Yoder, “Reflections on the Irrelevance of Certain Slogans to the Historical Movements They Represent; Or, The Cooking of the Anabaptist Goose; Or, Ye Garnish the

expressed in “The Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality.” In essence, the argument Yoder develops in the later essay is simple. The basic premise is that Anabaptism, at its core, has two criteria: (a) it is a believers church that (b) follows the way of the cross. He further defines “believers church” as (i) mission-oriented (when oriented externally) and (ii) evidenced by “voluntaryism”¹³ (when oriented internally). This description of the believers church assumes that “the adherence of a member is his own personal responsible, conscious, mature, adult choice and cannot be made for him even by someone who desires to make that decision for him for his own good.”¹⁴ Yoder also succinctly summarized the way of the cross as the renunciation of the use of power and the refusal to reduce persons to things in the making of decisions.¹⁵ This is, for Yoder, the kernel or essence of Anabaptism. It is not a historical description, he argued, but a “hermeneutic,”¹⁶ a principled distillation of his reading of sixteenth-century Anabaptism and the New Testament itself.

The narrative Yoder then unfolds is, by definition, the failure of Mennonite history to match the transhistorical ideal of the Anabaptist vision. Each instantiation of Mennonite community becomes—almost by default, because it is an actual community—a small Christendom, a *corpusculum Christianum*.¹⁷ And, each enculturation of the vision in the Mennonite Church is the result of “borrowing” from sources—whether Christian or not—external to the Anabaptist vision. Yoder, for example, charges John F. Funk with borrowing from Dwight L. Moody, and he singled out the appropriation of Sunday school and the creation of publishing houses for their role in synthesizing a new Mennonite identity.¹⁸ J. B. Smith, A. R. Wenger, and John L. Stauffer—to cite further examples—are noted for introducing dispensationalism, a “special flavor” of piety, and “unique techniques of biblical interpretation” into Old Mennonitism.¹⁹ And, of course, Yoder targeted Harold Bender, his mentor and a dominant midcentury church leader—for similar sorts of Mennonite syncretization accomplished through administrative and institutional efforts.²⁰ Bender, however, was actually only one in the long

Sepulchres of the Righteous,” Box 42, Folder 6, H. S. Bender Papers, Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen, Goshen, Ind.

13. Yoder, “Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality,” 4.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, 5.

17. *Ibid.*, 6.

18. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

19. *Ibid.*, 10.

20. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 10.

line of Mennonite leaders who profoundly reshaped “Mennonite reality” further and further away from “the Anabaptist vision.”

Stepping back from Yoder’s argument for a moment, three observations are in order. First, although Yoder sketches his analysis as if he were describing a declension narrative, the language of sin is remarkably absent. Rather, because the failure is apparent in alterations observed in the sociological shape of Mennonite reality and not in the sinfulness of the individual actors,²¹ the form of dissonance Yoder is primarily concerned about cannot be the same as that described in option 1 above.

Second, despite his professed posture of neutrality or objectivity, it is simply impossible for Yoder to stand outside of Mennonite reality while generating the comparative analysis that he does. As useful as such a summary statement might be for heuristic purposes, it could very well be argued that for a Mennonite to make the suggestion that Anabaptism can be defined as a typological “model”²² or as a “concept”²³ is possible only through another philosophical “borrowing” from beyond what Yoder considers true Anabaptism. In other words, to operate as if it is possible to define Anabaptism outside of its historical manifestations might be simply the next post-Bender step in the syncretization of Mennonite reality. Whatever the case may be, in adopting this posture, Yoder conceded that his own Mennonite Church inadvertently looked much like that of his apparent nemesis, Reinhold Niebuhr—namely, its historical reality always falls short of the ideal expressed in the life of Jesus.²⁴

Third, and related to the above, much of the description Yoder provided of the “great men” who determined the historical shape of Mennonite reality hauntingly reads as if it could be ascribed to Yoder himself. For example, he noted, speaking of “each of these men”:

The borrowings that he brought into this denomination from outside [were] synthesized so creatively with what had been there before, that by the time the next generation came along, they could

21. Yoder certainly bemoans the actions of individual actors, but he stops short of calling them sinful—it would certainly be hard to justify calling Funk a sinner for introducing Sunday school into the Mennonite Church.

22. *Ibid.*, 46.

23. *Ibid.*, 25.

24. While Niebuhr allows this reality to necessitate the occasional choice of evil (i.e., force), Yoder takes a rather Kantian stance and simply reasserts the duty to do good regardless. Although Yoder was often critical of Niebuhr, their relationship is more complex than is often realized. For more on the connections between the two, see David C. Cramer, “Realistic Transformation: The Impact of the Niebuhr Brothers on the Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder,” *MQR* 88 (Oct. 2014), 479-515.

not tell the difference between what he had brought to it and what had been there before. He had become in a sense “Mr. Mennonite.”²⁵

To read early twenty-first century descriptions of “neo-Anabaptism,” “Anabaptism,” and “Mennonite” theology and ethics is to discover that Yoder had become, in much the same sense, “Mr. Mennonite.”²⁶ This is perhaps the most substantial reason why Mennonites beyond the women and men directly harmed by Yoder’s actions cannot simply choose to ignore his writing from this day forward—the Mennonite Church’s very self-understanding has been shaped by Yoder’s influence through his preaching, teaching, publications, and various administrative roles.²⁷

And there is more in Yoder’s description of each of these Mennonite leaders that may have a bearing on his own case:

The fact that . . . [the leader’s] reaffirmation of Mennonite identity as he recreated it was a free choice led him to misperceive the effect of his ministry in the denomination. He tended to assume that those who followed his lead did so with the same genuineness of voluntary commitment which this position had had for him; but many of them were using his reaffirmation as a prop for their own security or as a new handle on their own children. He was thus by his own experience ill equipped to be aware of the difference between the psychology of those who followed him and the shape of his own leadership.²⁸

If nothing else, this observation reveals that Yoder was conscious that Mennonite leaders could problematically affect and unintentionally abuse their position because they misunderstood the psychological state of their followers. Whether he was self-aware enough to recognize that he too would become one of these leaders is, again, part of the ongoing

25. Yoder, “Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality,” 11.

26. See, e.g., James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter II.5, “The Neo-Anabaptists,” 150-166, where Yoder serves as the prime interpreter and exemplar of (neo-)Anabaptism.

27. Along with his teaching and administrative roles at A.M.B.S., Yoder also served in various administrative capacities with the Mennonite Central Committee, the Mennonite Board of Missions, the Institute of Mennonite Studies, and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Outside the Mennonite world, he taught at the University of Notre Dame and was involved in various capacities with the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, the Society of Christian Ethics, the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, and *Sojourners* magazine. In addition, Yoder had regular speaking and preaching engagements around the world and, of course, wrote prolifically. For a more detailed account of Yoder’s professional activities, see Mark Thiessen Nation, “John Howard Yoder: Mennonite, Evangelical, Catholic,” *MQR* 77 (July 2003), 357-370.

28. Yoder, “Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality,” 12.

debate. But regardless of how one answers this particular question, it seems that Yoder understood that the best way to describe the failure of Mennonite reality was in structural, sociological, or even political terms. Still, the case of his own actions suggests that the tension is even more complex than he realized.

*The Case of Yoder: Neither (Or Both) of the Above Differences*²⁹

By describing at some length these two options for naming Mennonite failure, we have taken what might appear to be a detour in order to set up what we take to be the unique challenge faced by the 1992 disciplinary committee when confronted by the case of John Howard Yoder. In short, the case of Yoder is unusual in that it exhibits the challenge that emerges when these two competing perspectives on the relationship between the Anabaptist vision and Mennonite reality collide. On one side, many Mennonites—perhaps foremost, the women who were harassed and abused by Yoder—construed Yoder’s actions as a *sinful* expression of Mennonite reality that fell short of the Anabaptist vision Yoder himself articulated (option 1).³⁰ On the other side, Yoder narrated his activities as an attempt to rectify *the failures of Mennonite structures*, to embody truly an Anabaptist vision of human sexual relations by imaginatively recreating Mennonite reality (option 2).

Yoder’s *For the Nations*, published in 1997, begins with the claim that the theme of the book is “the tone of voice, or the style and stance, of the people of God in the dispersion.”³¹ Throughout and in various modulations, Yoder reiterates that the believing community is “the world on the way,”³² the “first fruits” of the kingdom of God. This theme had been present in Yoder’s thought already for decades and he addressed it in some detail in *The Priestly Kingdom* (1984).³³ In that text,

29. In the use of the language of “case” (here and in what follows), we are utilizing a shorthand way of referring to the complexity of all that is involved here that is already in use. We use it more with reference to what is meant by a case study and less than what is meant by a legal case (though there is some overlap).

30. Indeed, we have ourselves largely adopted and developed this perspective at some length elsewhere (see note 1 above), and a number of others have carefully attended to this perspective in various ways as well. See, e.g., the excellent set of essays “On Teaching John Howard Yoder” by Gayle Gerber Koontz, Gerald J. Mast, Malinda E. Berry, Peter Dula, and Justin Heinzekehr in *Mennonite Life* 68 (2014), <http://archive.bethelks.edu/ml/issue/vol-68/>.

31. John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Public & Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 1.

32. *Ibid.*, 50.

33. For one of his earliest articulations of this perspective, see his essay “The Original Revolution” from 1968, in which he writes: “This is the original revolution; the creation of a distinct community with its own deviant set of values and its coherent way of incarnating them.”—John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 2003), 28.

Yoder suggested that one of the roles of the church, as a microcosm of the larger society, is to undertake “pilot programs to meet previously unmet needs or to restore ministries which have collapsed.” “The church,” he continued, “is more able to experiment because not all ministries need to pay off. She can take the risk of losing or failing, more than can those who are in charge of the state.”³⁴ In the context of nonviolence, this understanding of the role of the church has often received unqualified praise and appropriation.

Yet, this understanding of the church was equally important to Yoder in the context of sexuality. Already in the early 1970s he was exploring what rethinking singleness and nonmarital relations ought to look like in this new community that is the world “on its way.” In a memorandum dated March 28, 1974, that he circulated for feedback, Yoder sought to rectify the negative connotations of singleness in the church. As part of what one might properly call a “pilot project” concerning rethinking singleness, Yoder proposed the following:

If we were able to free ourselves from the tyranny of assuming that relations between two persons must be seen as potential courtship, we would discover a new liberty for the expression of affection and moral support between persons, whether of the same sex or of both sexes, without being frightened by the fear of misrepresentation or unwholesome developments. In some places we may clearly have been taught by “the youth culture” to rediscover the possibility that spiritual intimacy and physical touching need not lead to sexual expression, so that the married person may be free to express affection physically to others than his or her spouse, and the single person may receive physical and spiritual affirmation from others of the opposite or the same sex without fear or scandal.³⁵

The witness of his victims bears out the seriousness of Yoder’s conviction. This is noted well by Carolyn Heggen, a victim who came forward in the early 1990s: “In a bizarre way, he’s a very ethical man. He’s got to have an ethical system that supports his behavior.”³⁶ And, the

34. John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 92. In much of the following, we will be drawing on *The Priestly Kingdom* in order to illuminate a chronological coherence between Yoder’s thought and action. In nearly all cases, however, these ideas appear in other texts. In this case, the idea of the social creativity of the minority community is also present earlier and in other contexts. See, e.g., John Howard Yoder, *Revolutionary Christianity: The 1966 South American Lectures*, ed. Paul Martens, et al. (Eugene, Ore: Cascade, 2011), 100-101.

35. “Memorandum to whom it may concern,” March 18, 1974. The “youth culture” Yoder refers to here seems to be the broad sexual revolution that was transforming North American culture at the time.

36. Quoted in Tom Price, “Yoder’s actions framed in writings,” *The Elkhart Truth*, July 15, 1992. Heggen was referred to under the pseudonym “Tina” in this article.

ethical system Yoder employed was summarized in this way: “We are on the cutting edge. We are developing some new models for the church. We are part of this grand, noble experiment.”³⁷ As Yoder argued in *The Priestly Kingdom*, the believing church is free to experiment with pilot projects precisely because “It is the function of minority communities to remember and to create utopian visions.”³⁸

The very practical questions that emerge (and did emerge) with some force, then, are: (a) who gets to determine what sort of failure is displayed in the case of Yoder? and (b) by what criteria are Yoder’s actions to be evaluated—i.e., is the failure the behavior affirmed by the pilot project itself, Yoder’s inability to live up to the normative expectations of the pilot project, or Yoder’s inability to live up to the normative expectations of something else? On the surface, the answers seem to be easy: nearly everyone recognizes that Yoder’s actions were abusive and violent and therefore should be condemned by the church based on both the Mennonite Church’s own criteria and Yoder’s own nonviolent theology.³⁹ Pressing further, however, yields a slightly more clouded picture—a picture that, however murky it might be, helps to shed light on the ongoing tensions within Mennonite Church polity in its attempt to adjudicate a reconciling path through the competing perspectives on the licensing and ordaining of non-celibate LGBTQ persons for the ministry. But before turning to that debate, we must first describe the second Anabaptist tension sharpened by Yoder’s theology—namely, the tension between his emphasis on the power of the church to enact disciplinary processes and his view of the church as a subversive, prophetic, “anti-Constantinian” minority community.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND ANTI-CONSTANTINIANISM: THE MENNONITE PROBLEM WITH POWER

Already in *The Schleithem Confession*, early Anabaptists affirmed (a) the important role of church discipline in the application of “the ban,” (b) the separation of “all wickedness which the devil planted in the world,” and especially (c) the rejection of the sword.⁴⁰ Under Yoder’s guidance, and with obvious debts to Bender, the understanding of the church’s rejection of the sword was transformed and articulated in terms of a sweeping rejection of power and the attempt to make sure things turn

37. Ibid.

38. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 94.

39. Again, we are assuming Yoder’s own definition of violence here. See note 6 above.

40. See articles 2, 4, and 6, respectively.

out right.⁴¹ In defining Constantinianism as the belief that Providence works through earthly power and authority, Yoder names the antithesis, which he argues is the way God actually works in the world. God works through the “power” of weakness, through suffering.⁴² Yoder’s description of the church, therefore, is the inverse corollary of Constantinianism: the “minority community.”⁴³

The Case of Yoder: The Pilot Project v. Denominational Power

The description of the believing or true church as a minority community is important here, because of its posture vis-à-vis authority and its nonconformity to the world. In *The Politics of Jesus*, Yoder tied together this minority posture’s rejection of power with following Jesus:

There is but one realm in which the concept of imitation holds—but there it holds in every strand of the New Testament literature and all the more strikingly by virtue of the absence of parallels in other realms. This is at the point of the concrete social meaning of the cross in its relation to enmity and power. Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus—and only thus—we are bound by New Testament thought to “be like Jesus.”⁴⁴

Not only was the first edition of *The Politics of Jesus* unusually popular for an academic book—selling 75,000 copies—but Yoder’s account of imitating Jesus provided there seems also to have had a wide influence on subsequent generations of Mennonites. Yet, the open-endedness of the identification of power with enmity and the entailed Christian resistance to power—that is, the perpetual demand to stand in opposition to structures of power—led Yoder, first, toward a very localized ecclesiology that resisted even Mennonite denominational authorities as pseudo-Constantinian because they serve as representatives of a *corpusculum Christianity*.⁴⁵ Second, it also led him to

41. Although in *The Politics of Jesus* Yoder recognizes a certain amount of “ambiguity in the language of power” (136), he nevertheless ends the book with an argument for obedience as “accepting powerlessness” (237). This theme becomes even more prominent in his later work. See, e.g., John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2008), especially chapter 9, “On Not Being in Charge,” 168-179. Incidentally, the broad acceptance of this articulation excellently exhibits how Yoder functioned as “Mr. Mennonite” in the second half of the twentieth century.

42. See, e.g., Yoder, *For the Nations*, 34-36, 143-147.

43. See, e.g., Yoder, “The Kingdom as Social Ethic,” in *The Priestly Kingdom*, 80-101.

44. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 131.

45. It is important to note that not all aspects of Mennonite reality fall under Yoder’s judgment.

adopt something of a prophetic role both in the academic world⁴⁶ and in the Mennonite Church.⁴⁷

In *The Royal Priesthood*, Yoder described the localization of the church in manifold ways. In this particular context, however, it is important to note that "a mark of its authenticity will be our renouncing any of the tools of privilege and power in defining it."⁴⁸ In short, the church is always in need of reformation or, as he stated in *The Priestly Kingdom*, "we educate ourselves in the reasonable expectation that when we see things differently from others, we will often be seeing them more truly."⁴⁹

The seemingly self-effected prophetic role of Yoder also fits with his understanding of the church as minority, with the church as standing as an alternative subculture with deviant values. In 1984, he claimed, "The credibility and the comprehensibility of an alternative vision which does not always convince on the part of an individual original or 'prophetic' person, is enormously more credible and comprehensible if it is tested, confirmed, and practiced by a community."⁵⁰ It seems entirely coherent, then, to suspect that Yoder's experimental nonmarital relationships could very well be described as his prophetic contribution towards seeing nonmarital relationships "more truly," toward testing the comprehensibility of these relationships within a community.

And here we find the root of the challenge: given the expectation that the true church will see things differently from the rest of the world (including the Mennonite *corpusculum Christianum*), what process might possibly discern whether a pilot project is truly a success or a failure?

46. For example, Thomas Shaffer begins his reflections on Yoder with the words "John Howard Yoder, prophet and theologian."—Thomas L. Shaffer, *Moral Memoranda from John Howard Yoder: Conversations on Law, Ethics and the Church between a Mennonite Theologian and a Hoosier Lawyer* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), iii. Almost unfailingly, this represents the perception of Yoder by his former colleagues in the Christian ethics guild.

47. It is no secret that although Yoder grew up in a Mennonite community, taught in Mennonite schools, and served within various Mennonite institutions, he always maintained an uncomfortable relationship with the Mennonite world. This is evident from his early resistance to Harold Bender's institutional energy to his late perception of the relationship seen through the lens of the disciplinary process carried out by the Prairie Street Mennonite Church and the Indiana-Michigan Conference. To illustrate the latter, a letter from Yoder to Stanley Hauerwas dated July 27, 1993, states, "[M]y theology was a creative retrieval of certain elements congenial with the Anabaptist type but not present within the Mennonite world." And further, "Mennonites were never with me; they just respected the fact that I was getting attention from people like Gustafson and Hauerwas. Now their identity agenda is going in many other directions."—Box 212, John Howard Yoder Papers, HM 1-48, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Goshen, Ind.

48. Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 314.

49. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 95.

50. *Ibid.*, 93.

After all, Yoder argued for the rightness of Christian pacifism against overwhelming historical and numerical odds. Therefore, it is evident that near universal Christian resistance to a pilot project—in this case, the women and men who understood his actions as harassment or assault—would not necessarily convince him that the “grand, noble experiment” was a failure. There is, in Yoder’s vision of the church, no obvious empirical or external court of appeal to verify success or failure.

In Yoder’s vision of the church, all moral decisions are internal to the practices of the church. This practice of “practical moral reasoning” is defined by Yoder as “binding and loosing” or “the Rule of Christ.” Rooted in Matthew 18 and its long legacy in the Mennonite tradition, the practice of binding and loosing is intended to reconcile members within a community in the event an offense has been committed. In *The Priestly Kingdom*, Yoder succinctly defined the process: “A transcendent moral ratification is claimed for decisions made in the conversation of two or three or more, in a context of forgiveness and in the juridical form of listening to several witnesses.”⁵¹ Compatible descriptions appear in his writings from 1967 through 1997.⁵² Repeatedly, in line with his resistance to centralized authority within the church, he emphasized that “forgiveness is a person-to-person process, not a priestly prerogative.”⁵³ This conviction also surfaces, unsurprisingly, in his late writings on punishment where it functions in precisely the same manner—in both civil justice systems and in notions of “due process” drawn from the New Testament the accused should be confronted face-to-face by the accuser.⁵⁴

Stepping back once again, this brief analysis begins to illuminate and pull together several elements of the dissonance between Yoder and the 1992 disciplinary committee tasked with addressing the charges leveled against him. First, it is quite likely that Yoder understood his own actions to cohere with his broader attempt to reform a repressive Mennonite reality in the direction of a new or yet-unrealized Anabaptist vision of Christian sexuality. That is, it is doubtful that Yoder viewed himself as doing anything morally wrong in his attempts to cultivate experimental nonmarital (or extramarital) sexual relationships with various Christian women. Second, it illuminates why Yoder was frustrated by Mennonite institutional attempts to discipline him. That is, it is doubtful that Yoder thought the representatives of Prairie Street

51. *Ibid.*, 27.

52. See Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 323-358; Yoder, *For the Nations*, 30-31, 43-44.

53. Yoder, *For the Nations*, 30.

54. John Howard Yoder, *The End of Sacrifice: The Capital Punishment Writings of John Howard Yoder*, ed. John C. Nugent (Harrisonburg, Va.: Herald Press, 2011), 204.

Mennonite Church and the Indiana-Michigan Conference who began to discipline him in 1992 had the right perspective for determining what he may have done wrong, if, indeed, he had done anything morally wrong. Or, to restate, it seems that the disciplinary committee was seeking to determine what personal sin, if any, Yoder had committed (i.e., the failure of Mennonite reality in the first sense), while Yoder thought he should be judged according to whether his pilot project was a success or failure in embodying a new communal vision for the church (i.e., the failure of Mennonite reality in the second sense).⁵⁵

Third, the case of Yoder reveals that pretensions to identifying one's actions with the "true church"—at least in the Mennonite world—allows one recourse to the charge of Constantinianism in order to resist the judgment and power of select authorities. That is, in Yoder's ecclesiology, one can almost infinitely localize one's church community in an attempt to escape the discipline levied by church institutions and denominations. And, the evidence available at this time poignantly attests that Yoder began to see himself, during the disciplining process, as serving as a Girardian scapegoat for what he termed "the Mennonite women's posse,"⁵⁶ and as the archetypal "father" for the younger men in the denomination who were "driven by the oedipal need to reject both my person and my ideas."⁵⁷

So, how then does the Mennonite Church satisfactorily address internal challenges to its authority that infer that it is the denominational structure and procedures that are the failure and not the person or group subject to discipline? Or, perhaps another way to ask the question, with reference to Matthew 18, is this: which two or three witnesses are

55. This is to say that Yoder did indicate that he was sorry that women were harmed in his "misunderstood" attempt to incarnate this vision, but he never apologized for the vision itself or for attempting to embody it.

56. Letter from John Howard Yoder to Stanley Hauerwas, June 30, 1993, Box 212, John Howard Yoder Papers, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen, Goshen, Ind

57. Letter from Yoder to Stanley Hauerwas, July 27, 1993, Box 212, John Howard Yoder Papers, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen, Goshen, Ind. At this point, we hope it is clear that the claims that Yoder's actions are little more than expressions of social awkwardness, Asperger's Syndrome, or a mild form of autism are only relevant—if they are relevant at all—in rationalizing Yoder's awkward performance of the experimental nonmarital relations. See, e.g., Ted Grimsrud, "Word and Deed: The Strange Case of John Howard Yoder," <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2010/12/30/-word-and-deed-the-strange-case-of-john-howard-yoder/>, and Glen Stassen, "Glen Stassen's Reflections on the Yoder Scandal," <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2013/09/24/glen-stassens-reflections-on-the-yoder-case/>. An appeal to these conditions simply cannot explain Yoder's careful narrations of marital and non-marital relations or the larger theological framework within which they function. This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that Yoder suffered from an illness of some kind (whether psychological or otherwise). Rather, it is to say that, whatever language is used to describe Yoder's actions, his own description of them is internally coherent and intentional.

selected to give testimony concerning the sin of the brother or sister?⁵⁸ This is one of the questions that the case of Yoder raises that has been largely ignored, and it is a question that is not going away soon. The fact that Yoder was guilty of harassment and abuse that entailed violence (even according to his own definition of violence) appears to let the rest of us off the hook because nearly all implicitly assume that charging Yoder with violence is equivalent to rejecting his attempt to embody a form of sexuality that he claimed had emerged organically from the Anabaptist vision. But we are not really off the hook because most have simply sidestepped the challenge to “Mennonite reality” offered by his particular vision of Anabaptist sexuality. In the case of Yoder, he did eventually fulfill his denominational disciplinary obligations and was restored to his local church and to his role as a teacher and theological authority in the denomination.⁵⁹ But, it took much convincing for him to submit to this process,⁶⁰ and it appears that there are many who believe his completion of the process and his subsequent apology were performed *pro forma*. Understandably, others have been hesitant to pick up Yoder’s attempt to radically revise Christian sexuality—among men and women either single or married—in the Mennonite Church. But, that does not mean that the question of authority has been answered adequately. After all, another form of this very challenge to “Mennonite reality” has been growing for some time in the Mennonite Church. And, again, sexuality is at the heart of the challenge.

The Case of Theda Good: The Minority Community vs. Denominational Power

Having discussed Yoder’s case at some length, we turn finally to a comparison between it and the current case of Theda Good—both of which are the focus of current Mennonite discernment groups.⁶¹ Of

58. In our article “Scandalizing John Howard Yoder,” for example, we report on one woman who—at the time at least—described her physical relationship with Yoder quite positively. Regardless of the particular dynamics of the relationship, then, it is clear that she did not believe it to be *sinful*.

59. His ministry credentials, which Yoder never sought in the first place, were not reinstated.

60. In his memoir, *Hannah’s Child* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), Stanley Hauerwas recounts, “John was supposed to submit to a discipline laid out by a discernment committee of the church. They were enacting Matthew 18:15-20. It was not clear if John would submit. He did not think the process was following the rule that he should be allowed to confront his accusers. I am not sure what would have happened if it had not been for the intervention of Jim McClendon and Glen Stassen” (244-245). Others involved in the disciplinary process have described Hauerwas’s own insistence with Yoder that he comply with the process as well.

61. Elizabeth Evans reports, “On Sunday (Feb. 2 [2014]), a regional body of Mountain States Mennonites licensed the first lesbian in a committed same-sex relationship [Theda Good], the first step toward ordination.” – Elizabeth Evans, “Mountain States Mennonites

course, any attempt to draw parallels between these two cases could easily be misconstrued since, materially, the two cases could hardly be more different. Most importantly, Yoder's case involves charges of sexual abuse, harassment, and other violent offenses, which find absolutely no parallel in Good's case. Further, Yoder's position of power within "Mennonite reality"—in terms, for example, of gender, administrative connections, renown, and institutional employment—was considerably different from the position Good finds herself in. And, finally, while Yoder appeared to be enacting his vision either alone or on behalf of a very small number of others, Good appears to be representing not only herself but also both the Mountain States Mennonite Conference and a large number of others, including but not limited to LGBTQ Mennonites.

Nevertheless, there are a number of formal parallels between these respective cases that are instructive and, therefore, should not be ignored, despite the risk of misunderstanding. First, both Yoder and Good would describe their actions as expressing a faithful attempt to follow Jesus. We have outlined the logic of Yoder's "pilot-project" above. A brief comment concerning the logic of Good's position is also in order.⁶² The foundational assumption of this latter "minority position" appears to be that people are born as sexual beings (a) that are not necessarily limited by the traditional designations "male" and "female," and (b) that may require sexual expression beyond traditional heterosexual relations for fulfillment and flourishing. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many Mennonites have expressed loving solidarity with Good because they "feel called by Christ to welcome and bless LGBTQ people who are seeking to follow Jesus." And, returning to the posited disjunction between Anabaptist ideal and Mennonite reality, Good and many others are willing to appeal to the original ideal ("We believe this openness embraces the heart of the biblical Good News, and furthers our growth as communities of grace, joy and peace") against the derivative reality. That is, for the sake of their

take step toward gay ordination," *Religion News Service* (Feb. 3, 2014), online: <http://www.religionnews.com/2014/02/03/denver-mennonites-take-first-step-toward-gay-ordination/>.

62. In print, Good has maintained a rather low profile over the past year. The logic we are working from here, therefore, is drawn from a letter sent to executive board members, conference ministers, and other leaders of MC USA on Jan. 24, 2014. The letter was organized by six authors (one of whom was Good) and signed by 150 Mennonite ministers and others credentialed for ministry. For the text of the letter, see <http://www.pinkmenno.org/2014/01/150-mennonite-leaders-call-for-change-in-policies-toward-gay-christians/>.

understanding of the Gospel, they are willing to put themselves “at variance with denominational guidelines.”⁶³

At the same time, not all Mennonites hold these foundational assumptions. Therefore, a second similarity emerges: the expressions of sexuality practiced by Yoder and Good are, at least at present, interpreted as “sin”—that is, against what God intends—both by denominational documents and by a large number of Mennonites within the denomination.⁶⁴ To be sure, their actions are described quite differently—Yoder’s in terms of several forms of sexual violence and Good’s in terms of “same-sex” relationships or, sometimes more bluntly, as “homosexuality.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, both are regarded as “sinful.” Read in this vein, both Yoder and Good have fallen far short of the Anabaptist or biblical ideal. In both cases, therefore, denominational representatives are forced to confront and address challenges to their identity and authority expressed as actions (a) that the denomination defines as sinful, and yet (b) are narrated, by the minority community, as expressions of Christianity that are purer or closer to the Anabaptist vision of biblical living than the denomination itself embodies.

So, how then is such a challenge resolved? In the case of Yoder, some of those currently standing alongside Good support denominational attempts to condemn the actions of Yoder and take the lead in healing and reconciliation.⁶⁶ These same voices, however, cannot call upon MC USA denominational representatives to do the same in the case of Good, of course, because that action would simply bring condemnation upon themselves; these same voices thus find themselves in a dilemma with

63. Quotes taken from the letter cited in the immediately preceding note.

64. See, e.g., the *Confession of Faith*: “We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. . . . According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship” (Article 19). See also, e.g., Mark Nation’s side of the “conversation” with Ted Grimsrud in Mark Thiessen Nation and Ted Grimsrud, *Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 2008).

65. See, e.g. Willard M. Swartley, *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2003). Despite the bluntness of the title and some of the language in the book, Swartley offers one of the more sensitive treatments of the topic from a traditional view. Moreover, his ultimate rationale for the book is to aid the church in its processes of discernment. As he writes, “I too sit at the table of discernment to listen to how others perceive the crucial issues in this debate. On these matters we need to respectfully engage each other in ongoing discussion” (11).

66. Both the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, led by Sara Wenger Shenk, and the Mennonite Church USA, led by Ervin Stutzman, have made institutional attempts to address Yoder’s legacy. For the former, see the AMBS Statement on Teaching and Scholarship Related to John Howard Yoder (approved April 30, 2012), online: <http://www.ambs.edu/about/documents/AMBS-statement-on-JHY.pdf>; for the latter, see the John Howard Yoder Discernment Group website: <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/john-howard-yoder-discernment-group/>.

significant parallels to that faced by Yoder. And they, like Yoder, chafe at the possibility that they may be judged according to a perspective—held by the guiding documents and many of the constituents of MC USA—that in their minds radically misunderstands their position. Yet, as of June 30, 2014, and despite efforts to seek a resolution that might be “redemptive rather than punitive,” MC USA does not recognize Good’s licensing and will not recognize other “licenses and/or ordinations offered by area conferences to persons living in same-sex relationships.”⁶⁷

At present, therefore, the longstanding tension between church discipline and anti-Constantinian resistance of the minority community is palpable in the Mennonite world.⁶⁸ If it is unclear whether Yoder was really sorry for what he did, it is indelibly clear that Good and many others feel that they have nothing to be sorry about. And, there are those who have intimated that the only apology that will be forthcoming ought to be from MC USA itself.⁶⁹ At the same time, lest it seem that this minority community posture is peculiar to those who challenge traditional sexual norms, it must be noted that many Mennonites who hold to traditional views of marriage have taken the same posture. Given the growing acceptance of LGBTQ relationships within broader American culture and many segments of the church, some Mennonites with traditional views of marriage argue that “the ongoing dialogue over blessing same-sex relationships, credentialing pastors in same-sex relationships and the additional demands of LGBTQ . . . advocacy groups is crippling our witness and mission to the world.” Thus, instead of submitting to the outcome of the discernment process, they call for “clear decisions by the denominational leadership so we can determine the best direction for our congregations,” which involves “identifying with congregations, a conference, and a denomination that unite us in a common witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ.” In short, they are calling for their views of what it means to be “Christ-centered and Biblically-grounded” to be reaffirmed by the denomination and are

67. “Report from the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA,” http://181.224.147.130/~mennonit/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/EBReport_June30_2014.pdf.

68. Of course, there are many other factors contributing to the current tensions in the Mennonite world, including evolving views of sin itself, personality dynamics, and so on. All of these only further complexify but do not override the tension we describe here.

69. See, e.g., Yoderian echoes amplified in Stephanie Krehbiel’s charge that Mennonite denominational processes are violent in her essay “The Violence of Mennonite Process: Finding the Address of the Present,” <http://www.pinkmenno.org/2014/02/the-violence-of-mennonite-process-finding-the-address-of-the-present-part-1-of-2/>.

making it clear that, if their views are not reaffirmed, they will look to create new “minority communities” of like-minded believers.⁷⁰

Thus, as with Yoder, everyone seems to affirm the idea of communal discernment and fraternal correction in theory, but, also as with Yoder, in practice many seem unwilling to affirm the legitimacy of the outcome of such processes—unless the outcome affirms what they already believe. This state of affairs then leads to the appearance of the third tension in Anabaptist thought, a tension that is to be worked out at the 2015 MC USA Convention in Kansas City and beyond.

SEPARATION FROM SIN VS. “THE RULE OF PAUL”: THE FUTURE OF MC USA

As Mennonites in North America look to address the case of Good in the next months and years, once again they find a tension between two emphases in the tradition. Pulling in one direction—again, since at least the creation of the *Schleitheim Confession*—the tradition has maintained a strong sense of separation from sin and “the wickedness which the devil has planted in the world.”⁷¹ Although Mennonites have been taught—by Yoder above all—that they are not (or no longer) sectarian, the urge to draw a sharp line between what is good and what is sinful persists. In this generation, the line is generally drawn most sharply between peace (good) and violence (sinful), and it is imperative that one be on the side of peace. In the case of Theda Good, many Mennonites are convinced that describing LGBTQ persons and their concerns as immoral (i.e., delegitimizing the personhood of LGBTQ persons) is inherently violent and, therefore, sinful. Standing on the side of good, therefore, requires drawing a sharp line between those who are on the side of affirmation and inclusion (good) and those on the side of exclusion (sinful). But, for another large group of Mennonites, the line between traditional understandings of sexuality and marriage (good) and same-sex relationships (sinful) is drawn just as sharply. And, despite the fact that both groups claim to be drawing upon the Anabaptist or biblical ideal as their lodestone, both groups also seem to desire that MC USA institutions and representatives recognize, defend, and further entrench or expand their competing positions against the other. If this longstanding Anabaptist emphasis prevails, there seems to be little hope that MC USA will, or even can, remain united.

70. See the “Transformation Letter” (Feb. 3, 2014) sent from a number of pastors in the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference to the denominational leadership at <http://transformationletter.blogspot.com/>.

71. *The Schleitheim Confession*, trans. and ed. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1973), 11.

Pulling in the opposite direction, however, Mennonites have been taught—again, by Yoder as much as anyone—that dialogue in disagreement is a defining mark of true Christianity. Yoder referred to this process as “The Rule of Paul” and, in the book *Body Politics*, he explained it as follows: “There is no voting in which a majority overruns a minority and no decision of a leader by virtue of his office. The only structure this process needs is the moderating that keeps it orderly and the recording of the conclusions reached.”⁷² At present, it is this strand that the denominational representatives are attempting to follow, evidenced by the recent appeals for prayer, patience, and understanding issued by Ervin Stutzman, executive director of the Mennonite Church USA.⁷³ If this Anabaptist emphasis prevails, it may be possible that MC USA can remain united. It is clear, however, that some also perceive continued dialogue to be an implicit affirmation of the status quo,⁷⁴ while others perceive it as flirting with compromise.⁷⁵

What the future holds for the American Mennonite community is unclear and probably unimagined at this point.⁷⁶ The case of Yoder has occupied many Mennonites for decades, and many within the community have been forever scarred by the sexual violence that was perpetrated—and allowed to be perpetrated—in his attempt to bring others into what he understood as a “grand, noble experiment.” To that extent, his execution of the experiment failed miserably. We take this volume of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* to be just one of many steps toward coming to grips with the many facets of this failure. Yet, in addressing the failure, and the broader persistence of sexual abuse in the Mennonite community, we also believe it to be important to recognize the ways in which the logic that supported Yoder’s experiment is still at

72. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 2001), 67. See also John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues between Anabaptists and Reformers*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder; trans. C. Arnold Snyder and David C. Stassen (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora, 2004).

73. See, e.g., “Call to Prayer from Ervin Stutzman,” www.mennoniteusa.org/call-to-prayer-from-ervin-stutzman/.

74. See, e.g., Jennifer Yoder, “Response by Jennifer Yoder to the Response by Ervin Stutzman,” <http://queermenno.wordpress.com/2014/02/05/108/>.

75. See, e.g., the “Transformation Letter” cited above.

76. For a hopeful perspective on the future of MC USA, see John D. Roth, “From Tragedy to Apocalypse: Why we can be hopeful about the future of the church,” *The Mennonite*, www.themennonite.org/issues/17-5/articles/From_tragedy_to_apocalypse. For a more sobering analysis, see Ted Grimsrud, “Will Mennonite Church USA survive? Reflecting on three decades of struggle,” <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2014/02/28/-will-mennonite-church-usa-survive-reflecting-on-three-decades-of-struggle-part-1/>; and id., “Is the Survival of the Mennonite Church USA now less likely?,” <http://thinkingpacifism.net/2014/07/01/is-the-survival-of-mennonite-church-usa-now-less-likely/>.

work in the Mennonite Church in the ways it wrestles through issues relating to sexuality, including but not limited to the very contemporary and pressing Mennonite disagreements relating to the case of Theda Good.

Frustration seems to be mounting on all sides as lines are drawn clearer and sharper between those for and against the licensing of Good. Both sides claim to be embodying what they take to be the true vision of Christian sexuality;⁷⁷ and both sides claim that the other has fallen far from the ideal in the first sense (i.e., the other side is sinning, either through violence or through condoning sexually immoral behavior). Yet, neither side has given up hope that the power of denominational structures can be utilized in service of their appropriation of the ideal. And, it is precisely this that is currently at stake, since, for better or worse, Mennonites still desire the denomination's authority (i.e., the authority of the majority) to affirm what counts as good and what counts as sinful. The "Report from the Executive Board" (June 30, 2014) acknowledged this indirectly: "As a national conference, we will not recognize Theda Good's licensing unless the Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly changes the stated polity on same-sex marriage." Indeed, even the vigorous appeals and oftentimes critical responses to the Executive Board from Mennonites on both sides implicitly attest to this desire as well.⁷⁸

MC USA, in the case of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ inclusion, is a house divided against itself. Whether this division is sufficient to destroy the house is yet to be seen. But, to suggest that either the case of Yoder or the case Good has created these divisions is to overstate the case. Both cases have revealed and refined many of the longstanding tensions inherent in Mennonite practice and theology, tensions that have merely been exacerbated and broadened in the current debate over same-sex marriage. As Mennonites move forward, perhaps it is time to recognize that these tensions are not merely evident in the failure of "Mennonite

77. Even the denominational documents reflect this rhetoric. The "Report from the Executive Board" (June 30, 2014), for example, states: "These are important documents, not because they describe rules for behavior but because they describe our highest aspirations" (2). Perhaps this statement, as clearly as any, indicates that the Anabaptist vision is, and always has been, malleable and recreated according to the evolving challenges facing "Mennonite reality."

78. See, e.g., Tim Nafziger, "Pink Menno voices respond to Ervin Stutzman," *The Mennonite*, Feb. 9, 2014, online: http://www.themennonite.org/bloggers/timjn/posts/-Pink_Menno_voices_respond_to_Ervin_Stutzman; Anna Groff, "Letters from conference leaders and pastors express concern about Mountain States' decision: Leaders in Ohio, Indiana-Michigan and East Coast conferences send three main letters," *The Mennonite*, March 1, 2014, http://www.themennonite.org/issues/17-3/articles/Letters_from_conference_leaders_and_pastors_express_concern_about_Mountain_States_decision.

reality" but also in the selective articulations of the "Anabaptist vision" itself; that is, in the various—and at least occasionally self-justifying—Anabaptist renderings of the biblical ideal. This may sound like a despairing conclusion, and perhaps it is simply a reflection of sobering times. But, as difficult as it may be, there is no automatic trump card available to resolve the difficulties of Mennonite reality. There is no self-evident appeal to good or evil from which consensus will emerge; there is certainly no self-evident process for determining how to move forward when there is fundamental disagreement about these most basic questions. Yet, perhaps this helps us understand why, despite their obvious flaws, the various institutions of Mennonite reality are still valued, are still utilized, and are still looked to for some kind of authority—even (or perhaps *especially*) when their authority is questioned.

Review Essay

John Howard Yoder: Radikaler Pazifismus im Gespräch. By Hans-Jürgen Goertz. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 2013. Pp. 240. €39.99.

JOHN D. REMPEL*

Radikaler Pazifismus is written by one of the great minds in Anabaptist studies about another of the great minds in the field. Hans-Jürgen Goertz was a professor of social and economic history at the University of Hamburg until his retirement in 2002. He continues to write and edit in his field, most importantly as the editor of the massive fifth volume of the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*. John Howard Yoder was a professor of theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana, until 1983, when he became a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, in nearby South Bend, where he worked until his death in 1997.

In my review I have tried to bear in mind the difference in context between mainstream Mennonites in North America and northern Europe. Goertz engages the legacy of Yoder with such comprehensiveness that the dialogue amounts to an encounter between two contesting worldviews, not simply two sets of theological postulates. The issue at the heart of these contesting worldviews is ecclesiology; it is the golden thread that runs from one end of the book to the other. This is not surprising since ecclesiology is the most distinctive mark of the Anabaptist and Mennonite tradition. The book consists of six concise chapters and an afterword. The early chapters concern Yoder's historical writing on Swiss Anabaptism. The remaining chapters focus on his peace theology and ecclesiology. Yoder's personality and the working of his mind are integral to Goertz's analysis. At a few points (e.g., 7, 204) Goertz slides into ad hominem arguments against Yoder.

Along the way, he makes only one cryptic reference to charges of sexual misconduct against Yoder (204). Yoder's misconduct has negative implications for the integrity and value of his work. But because my task is to review what Goertz has written, I will not pursue the matter of

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Yoder's sexual conduct here. For the most part Goertz remains with matters of substance, seeking common ground between himself and Yoder where he can find it. Even though one senses that Goertz's thinking is closer to that of Gordon Kaufman, whom he cites at key points, the most persistent source for his critique is Karl Barth, the towering Protestant theologian of the twentieth century (90-94, 102-105 et passim). Edmund Schlink, Oscar Cullman, and Paul Tillich also serve as significant reference points for Goertz's investigation. He repeatedly notes that Barth and Cullmann were Yoder's mentors and left a formative imprint on his thinking. Among Mennonite scholars, Goertz most frequently refers to Chris Huebner, Mark Thiessen Nation, and Earl Zimmermann. Without seeing a need to justify it—as would be the case in many North American conversations on Anabaptism—Goertz places the debate within the classical dogmatic structure of Trinity, incarnation, death and resurrection.

To begin, Goertz continues the scholarly debate that specialists in the origins of Swiss Anabaptism have been carrying on for a generation. Of interest for Goertz's larger theological purpose is that he places Yoder firmly within the Schleithem paradigm: a disciplined believers church practicing nonresistance and separation from the world (30-37, 54ff). Goertz's first and abiding bone of contention is the Schleithemian insistence on the visibility (*Sichtbarkeit*) of the church: this church *is* the body of Christ (41ff). Yoder's defense of this claim is grounded in his theology of the incarnation—in Jesus' death and resurrection we are given the normative revelation of God; this normative revelation is prolonged in the visibility of church (51, 78).

In a complex assessment of Yoder's engagement for church unity (chapter 3) Goertz concludes that Yoder's biggest stumbling block is his insistence on the identity of the visible church with Christ's rule over church and world (69). Everything that follows in *Radikaler Pazifismus* is an attempt to vindicate this one, sweeping critique. He faults not only the undialectical way of thinking that lies behind Yoder's claim of a "faithful church" but also asserts that his claim is accompanied by an arrogant spirit and a confusion of categories. By the latter Goertz means that a faithful church, even as practiced by Free Churches, is always an ideal; it is real only in a paradoxical sense (103, 111, 135), never as a historical reality (71-76). The "obstinate" insistence by the Free Church that its ecclesiology is distinct from that of a mass church (*Volkskirche*) blocks the way to church unity (81). Goertz is perplexed that the Anabaptists, who made a great deal of both the "inward" and "outward" in relation to sacraments, were unable to apply this notion to their concept of the church (87).

At this point in the unfolding of his argument (chapter 4, *Theology of Peace*) Goertz invokes what he holds to be one of Barth's greatest achievements, "drawing ethics back into dogmatics" (90). He laments that Yoder, as Barth's student, does not follow suit. As applied to Christology, Barth's achievement means that discipleship arises from God's initiative in Jesus' resurrection, whereas Yoder insists that it comes out of Jesus' nonviolent acceptance of the cross (93-94). Yoder's insistence means that he separates Christology from discipleship, and in so doing, makes Jesus' nonviolent death the defining content of theology. Goertz concludes that for Yoder, "Theology is peace theology or it is no theology" (95).

The author proceeds to engage the historical unfolding of Yoder's ecclesiology. In it the early church was the embodiment of peace theology. The church's loss of visibility in the Constantinian shift brought about a radical shift in the character of its theology—that is, it was no longer determined by Jesus' nonviolent acceptance of the cross. One of the tragic outcomes of this posture, according to Goertz, is that the Radical Reformation refused to share responsibility for society. Instead, in Goertz's seminal turn of phrase, it left the state to be "the exponent of the fallen creation" (99). Over against that position, Goertz argues that the church must have a "political" role in society—that is, join in, to some degree, the compulsion required to reclaim the world from disorder and chaos (100). Goertz acknowledges that late in his career Yoder did expand his view of the responsibility of the church. This view included the vocation to live for the welfare of the city as a dimension of its diaspora identity, as set forth in Yoder's *For the Nations*. Even so, according to Goertz, Yoder's "church" remains the visible community in which the kingdom has already come.

Goertz rehearses some of his arguments a second time, reiterating his insistence that Yoder and the people for whom he speaks cannot see the paradoxical and eschatological nature of all historical reality—essentially that the being of the church is never identical with its historical form. It follows that in history the true church is invisible, as Augustine laid out so compellingly. To claim otherwise is to "ontologize" the church, or to claim for it the objective realization of salvation in history. This, Goertz asserts, is the tragic flaw of Anabaptism (103-108).

As he adds layers to his argument Goertz has not lost sight of its earlier aspects. Here he returns to his postulate that Yoder locates salvation solely in the cross. Goertz introduces a new and exceedingly complex dimension to his argument against that view. It is this: historical critical scholarship makes it clear that we cannot recover the historical Jesus. Yoder's facile (the kettle calling the pot black!) historicism results in the fact that the "exegetical foundation for Yoder's

social-ethical argument and the anchoring of radical pacifism in the existence of Jesus is thrown into confusion" (115).

Goertz proceeds from the apostolic to the patristic era in his critique of Yoder's ecclesiology and peace ethic. He identifies Yoder's position with that of Tertullian, whom he describes as a rigorist representing only a small minority in the ancient church. Here Goertz aligns himself with Peter Leithart's highly controversial *Defending Constantine*. He moves quickly into the present in order to reject Yoder's principled pacifism, a form of nonviolence that does not allow for "boundary cases" (Barth) in which not resorting to violence becomes the greater evil (121-126). Yoder's Achilles heel, and that of his mentor Cullmann, according to Goertz, is his insistence on the *negative* calling of the state—that it remains within the order of creation; its calling to keep a fallen world from chaos is different from the church's calling to participate in creation's restoration. Goertz is adamant that in the face of the twentieth century's totalitarian regimes absolute nonparticipation in violence is irresponsible.

In short, Yoder's recourse to ontological categories means that the state is unchangeably confined to its negative role whereas the church is exalted uncritically into a salvific role. For Goertz this fits exactly with Yoder's view of the church as the kingdom come, with no sense of its paradoxical nature, of the tension between history and eschatology, or of the benign developments that have led to liberal democracy (129-135; 146-152). This ontologizing of both state and church absolutizes the antagonism between them (138-139).

Goertz contrasts his position with that of Yoder. For Goertz all movement toward a just social order, whether by church or state, is accompanied by ambiguity and contradiction. The church is morally no better than society; both of them live solely by God's grace. The "Christian's" calling—the language has shifted from the communal to the individual—is to work for "more and more humanity in relationships among people" (153). This stance is sustained not by ethical principles but by a "justifying encounter with God" (154). How to act cannot be prescribed beforehand by the church; it can only be found by the individual under the word of God (a term that calls for explanation in this context). Together secular and religious people create "oases of peace" (155).

Goertz next argues that living out of justification shifts the nature of peacemaking. He grants that Yoder himself went part way in this shift when he realized that most practitioners of just war theory were as concerned as pacifists to limit violence. Late in life Yoder also accepted just policing as a form of peacemaking that is morally acceptable in the

grey zone between nonviolence and resorting to violence. Goertz acknowledges that this kind of shared public ethic is a true novelty in Yoder's thought as is his affinity for liberation theology (160-164; 169-171). Yet, in the end, Yoder did not leave behind his ontologizing of the church: he does not grasp the fundamental notion of the Christian's solidarity with fallen humanity but preserves its "overagainstness."

The heart of the problem, according to Goertz, lies in Anabaptism's substitution of the "church" for the Magisterial Reformation's "justification by faith" as the interpretive key to the Gospel. Only the latter lets us see ourselves as sinners just like our unbelieving neighbors, all equally in need of God's grace (186ff). In his *Body Politics* Yoder glimpses the consequences of de-ontologizing church and world when he allows that the "world" is also capable of grasping the meaning of basic realities like community and forgiveness: he has moved, if incompletely, from the constraints of "middle axiom" thinking to the breadth of analogical thinking (188-191). Goertz insists, however, that Yoder's shift remains incomplete because of his dogged insistence that God's imperative (make peace) becomes the church's indicative (we make peace). This, he argues, is ethical reductionism that lacks all transcendence and mystery.

In the final twenty pages of the book Goertz summarizes his arguments. Of particular note is his understanding of Barth's ecclesiology as ultimately standing over against Yoder's. In Barth's thought the church comes into visible being when people live out the grace they have encountered. But because the church still belongs to the realm of "flesh" it is never identical with God's reign. Its visibility is not found in its perfection but, ironically, in its fallibility. Because he so consistently separated Christology from ecclesiology, Barth was unable to embrace a Free Church understanding of the church, which merges the two (210-218). In other words, it is Christ alone and not the church that has eschatological finality. The call to the church is to leave behind its "ontological fixation" and embrace "messianic expectation" and the modest, humble role implied in that shift.

Radikaler Pazifismus is Goertz's mature judgment of Schleithemian Anabaptism, and, by extension, most forms of historical Mennonitism, and by further extension, many forms of the Free Church. I venture a few specific criticisms. My first one is that the historic Schleithemian paradigm into which he places Yoder (and by implication any Mennonite community with a strong believers church theology) is far too unnuanced to apply. Today that paradigm applies only to Old Order groups like the Amish and some of the Aussiedler communities in Germany descended from Russian Mennonites.

Second is Goertz's critique of separatist Anabaptist and Mennonite ecclesiology. He is right in pinpointing a tendency toward perfectionism, which brings with it the near equation of church and kingdom. He is right in naming the wariness of the Mennonite mindset toward paradox and ambiguity. But from the beginning of Anabaptism there have been countervailing premises. To take one sixteenth-century example, the severe banning to purge the church of sin in Leonard Bouwens and Dirk Philips (and to some extent Menno Simons) demonstrates the flaws that Goertz identifies. But a protest against this extreme by representatives of all the German-speaking Anabaptist groups in their 1550s conferences in Strasbourg is evidence that they had theological resources to address this shadow side of their identity. Further, most Anabaptist streams did not claim in an unqualified way that the church was perfectly regenerate, or simply put, that the church itself is God's salvation (107). A crucial distinction was made. Baptism was offered on the confession of faith in Christ (taking someone at her word). That is different from claiming certainty about the state of someone's soul, something that belongs only to God. Hubmaier, Marpeck, and Menno all have an acute awareness of the persistence of sin in the life of the church and its members and the unending need for grace. Why did Goertz not make reference to this other side of the church in Anabaptism? It would have qualified his sweeping judgments.

With breathtaking brevity (113ff) Goertz pronounces on the most profound question Protestantism has faced in the past two centuries—that is, the historical critical reading of the Bible. He presumes that the case has been definitively made that the picture of Jesus we have in the canonical Gospels is at fundamental variance with the findings of historical critical research. This is simply not the case: there continues to be a wide spectrum of views on this matter by serious scholars. Therefore, it is breathtaking once again to see Goertz conclude that we lack all evidence that the historical Jesus was nonviolent, and even more, that we have no basis for ethics in the theological picture the church painted of Jesus after the resurrection. According to Goertz, only the resurrection itself offers the basis for a Christian ethic.

Finally, there is Goertz's affirmation of modern liberal individualism and individual conscience as the only authentic arbiter of faithful living. Linked to that is another exceedingly complicated notion, which Goertz fails to develop, that justification by grace (not faith) necessarily means that everyone—believer and unbeliever alike—is simultaneously a sinner and justified. In this argument the church is only one of many bearers of salvation: Christian and secular people are equally gifted by God to make the world more just and to create "oases of peace" (155).

To conclude, Hans-Jürgen Goertz lays out the most important fault line running through mainstream North Atlantic Mennonite theology today. In North America, at least, there are liberals and conservatives on both sides of the divide he documents between himself and Yoder as two incompatible ways of reading the tradition. I remain profoundly perplexed by the purpose of his manifesto. Has Goertz come to the conclusion that Anabaptism, at least as interpreted by the majority Mennonite tradition, and above all, by its towering twentieth-century theologian, John Howard Yoder, has taken a tragic course—that its misshapen theology of the church stands in the way of church unity and of solidarity with all movements for justice that are part of pluralistic societies today? I see nothing Goertz has written here that qualifies this judgment of his own tradition, the dominant subject of his brilliant academic career. He is correct historically and theologically that the difference in ecclesiology is what separates Mennonitism from the Magisterial and Catholic Reformations. And his criticisms, taken individually, often make theological sense. For example, one could still do Mennonite theology without ontologizing the church or the state. But taken together I find it almost irresistible to conclude that Goertz is rejecting that which makes Mennonites Mennonite.

Announcing the First Annual Schafer-Friesen Research Fellowship

The Schafer-Friesen fellowship is awarded annually by the Mennonite Historical Library (MHL) at Goshen College to support scholarship in Reformation and Anabaptist History.

First priority for the award is to individuals doing advanced research using the resources of the Mennonite Historical Library. The award will support travel costs to the Mennonite Historical Library, up to three weeks of room and board, and a small stipend.

The Fellowship may also be used, secondarily, to support publications on Reformation and Anabaptist topics.

To apply, please send a letter of interest, along with a one-page research plan and budget to John D. Roth, MHL, Goshen College, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526, by March 1, 2015.

The Schafer-Friesen Research Fellowship was established through a generous gift of Geraldine Schafer Friesen and Dr. Abraham Friesen.

This fellowship is established in honor of Laura Schafer Martens, aunt of Geraldine Schafer Friesen. Laura graduated with a BA in Home Economics from Goshen College in 1947 and taught Home Economics for much of her active career. From 1964 until her retirement in 1987, she was a beloved teacher at Shafter (CA) High School while serving in many civic, educational and church roles that supported the interests of children and young mothers. Laura and her husband, Frank Martens, were active members of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Shafter, CA.



NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conference: “Remembering Muted Voices: Conscience, Dissent, Resistance and Civil Liberties in World War I through Today,” October 19-21, 2017. This interdisciplinary conference, hosted by the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial (Kansas City, MO), will explore the experiences of those groups and individuals who raised their voices against the war, sometimes at great cost. A fuller conference description is available from Andrew Bolton (abolton@cofchrist.org). A “Call for Papers” will follow in 2016.

Conference: “Mennonite/s Writing VII: Movement, Transformation, Place,” March 12-15, 2015, Fresno Pacific University. Co-sponsored by Fresno Pacific University and Hesston College. This seventh conference on Mennonite writing will both celebrate and examine writing that addresses experiences of movement, transformation, and/or place, and their influences on Mennonite literary culture. The theme is intended to be broadly interpreted. The conference welcomes a wide variety of voices and seeks to create a site of learning and inspiration. Writers of all ages, disciplines, and cultural or ethnic backgrounds are encouraged to attend the conference. For more information: www.fresno.edu/mennos-writing.

Call for Essays: “Mennonite Systematic Theology,” *The Conrad Grebel Review*. David Cramer’s “Mennonite Systematic Theology in Retrospect and Prospect,” which appeared in the Fall 2013 volume of *The Conrad Grebel Review*, has generated considerable debate about the history, future, and even possibility of “Mennonite Systematic Theology.” The occasion of this debate serves as the impetus for further sustained reflection on what “Mennonite Systematic Theology” is or may be. To that end, we invite submissions of original scholarly articles, especially those constructive in orientation, on this amorphous and contested theme. Articles may address one or more of the following issues: the qualifier “systematic”; the qualifier “Mennonite”; internal coherence and diversity; Mennonite systematic theology and the Bible (and biblical theology); global perspectives; historical perspectives; “Mennonite theology” and “Anabaptist theology”; Mennonite theology and ecumenism and/or the wider Christian tradition; theology and praxis or lived faith; theology and ecclesiology or doxology. Length: 5,000-7,000 words. See further submission guidelines. Deadline: April 1, 2015. Submissions will undergo a peer-review process. Address inquiries and submissions to guest editors Paul Martens (Baylor University) and

Malinda Berry (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) at Paul_Martens@baylor.edu.

Call for Papers: "Mennonite Education: Past, Present, and Future," October 16-18, 2015, Bluffton University. *Please note the change of date from announcement in previous issue.* Mennonite educational practices and institutions in the 21st century face a time of upheaval and transformation arising from the impact of new communication technologies such as the Internet and digital media, from changing assumptions about the organization and worth of knowledge, and from shifting religious and cultural demographics. On the occasion of the publication of a new biography of Mennonite historian and educational pioneer C. Henry Smith, the C. Henry Smith Trustees and the Mennonite Historical Society invite presentation proposals from across the academic disciplines on a broad range of topics related to the past, present, and future of Mennonite education in all of its varied North American settings, including from early childhood through graduate programs. Please send inquiries and proposals to Gerald Mast: mastg@bluffton.edu. Proposals for papers or panels should be received by May 15, 2015. For more information, see the conference website: www.bluffton.edu/conference/.

Grants: The Mennonite Historical Society announces an "Open Research Grant" of \$2,000 to promote research and publication in Anabaptist-Mennonite studies. To apply, send the following materials by March 1, 2015, to Leonard Gross, Secretary, Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526: a two- or three-page summary of the project stating its significance to the field of Anabaptist-Mennonite history, a budget of anticipated expenses, a vitae, and one letter of recommendation. All applicants must be members of the Mennonite Historical Society. Recipients of the award will be announced at the May meeting of the M.H.S. Board of Directors. Disbursements will be made by June 1. The Prize Selection Committee may choose not to award the grant if none of the applications is deemed acceptable. *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* has the "right of first refusal" for scholarly articles that result from research funded by the grant.

BOOK REVIEWS

Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective. By John Howard Yoder. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker, eds. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic. 2014. Pp. 432. \$45.

In his writings on the Psalms, Walter Brueggemann suggests that the psalmists lead us through a process of “orientation, disorientation and new orientation.”¹ I have found Brueggemann’s comments helpful in guiding me through the recent discussions surrounding John Howard Yoder’s sexual misconduct. Yoder has provided me—as he has with so many others—my plumb line “orientation” to the world. As Wilbert R. Shenk’s introduction point out, Yoder’s vision and theological commitments were instrumental in shaping the work of Mennonite Board of Missions among African Independent Churches in Cote d’Ivoire, West Africa, where my parents served as missionaries and where I grew up. As a young adult, I attended and was baptized at Prairie St. Mennonite Church—the congregation Yoder called home for many years. And as a student at Fuller Seminary, Yoder’s writings have been, and continue to be, some of the most powerful and formative in shaping my missiological grid. Given Yoder’s influence in my own life, I now find myself experiencing a period of “disorientation.” I am baffled by Yoder’s destructive tendencies and wonder what should have been done in terms of accountability. Like the psalmists, I am trying to get to a place of “reorientation,” one that narrates how God rescues us from sin in a decisive way and that includes experiencing God’s grace, peace, and love, trusting that it will lead to reconciliation with Yoder’s legacy.²

While John Howard Yoder is best known for his work on issues of war and peace, the editors of this volume note that the theology of mission preoccupied him as a scholar, teacher, missionary, and ecumenical dialogue partner for most of his life. This book is the result of transcribing from reel-to-reel audiocassettes Yoder’s lectures in a course he regularly taught on theology of mission at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries between 1964 and 1983. While the lectures were significantly edited for publication—as would be the case with any oral transcription—the editors have managed to preserve the informal quality of Yoder’s voice in a classroom setting while producing a text that is both accessible and professional. The editors should be commended for their painstaking work,

1. See Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary’s Press, 1993).

2. The most substantive reflections I have found regarding Yoder are by Mark Thiessen Nation and Marva Dawn: “On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder”: <http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/>. See also the A.M.B.S. Statement on Teaching and Scholarship related to John Howard Yoder.—<http://www.ambs.edu/about/documents/AMBS-statement-on-JHY.pdf>.

attention to detail, and commitment to the integrity of a project that faithfully represents Yoder's thinking in this area.

The book is intended for seminary students and professors who are studying the theology of Christian mission from an Anabaptist perspective (10). Toward that end, I would recommend using it as a textbook in missiology or ecclesiology courses. In addition, the book's material will have a wider appeal to audiences less acquainted with Yoder's missiological thinking. Because so little has been published on Yoder's missiology, this may be his most salient material to appear in print since *The Politics of Jesus*.

In the introduction, Wilbert R. Shenk, a missiologist, masterfully situates Yoder's work and thinking within the context of his Anabaptist heritage, European theological education, and North American professional assignments and roles—including direct involvement in mission program leadership—as well as historical developments and discussions in contemporary missiology. The book itself is composed of twenty-three chapters; and as readers have come to expect of Yoder, the lectures integrate biblical insights, historical perspectives, and a deep commitment to peace, ethics, and ecclesiology informed by the way of Jesus.

The primary issue Yoder seeks to disentangle is the Western inheritance of a Christendom ecclesiology, "which forces a choice between a church without mission and a mission without a church" (33). As he has done in so much of his work, Yoder teaches all of us how to think, asking questions that challenge long-held modes of thinking. Yoder's argument begins with the contention that Paul's missionary medium and message fundamentally contradict those of the modern missionary movement—namely, the strong emphasis on winning individuals and the tendency to use manipulation and domination as means of conversion. According to Yoder, Paul's work demonstrates that the "community precedes converts" as demonstrated in the fact that Paul himself began work in already existing communities of people gathered in local synagogues. Some accepted the message while others rejected it; neither was the result of coercion but of a "voluntariness."

Moreover, Yoder critiques the approach whereby a lone-ranger missionary takes the Gospel message to some distant (non-Western) land. Based on his reading of 2 Corinthians 5 and Ephesians 2 and 3, Yoder says, Christ's work reconciles people into a new social reality; this "new humanity" represents both the "medium and the message" into which others are invited to participate. The missionary impulse then is lodged in the life of the community rather than in the activity of an individual. Yoder argues that the New Testament record, as well as the life of the early church, effectively abolished the laity and taught that all members of the body have gifts for ministry. But because the "re-clergification" of Christianity was reintroduced through the Christendom project, the shape of the church's mission became distorted as specific individuals were bestowed with special missionary gifts. Yoder's contention is that because every member is in some sense a prophet or priest and because the Great Commission "As You Go" reflects a collective statement that applies to everyone, there is no distinct missionary profession as we have come to believe.

Readers of this text might be tempted to conclude that Yoder's work is dated, in the sense that it reflects themes of a bygone era. To a certain extent this is accurate in as much as Yoder was a product of his times, engaging with contemporary issues and themes such as Donald McGavran and the church growth movement. Having said that, I would argue that because one of Yoder's major contributions is teaching his students how to think about any given subject, many of the questions he raises provide a more robust critique of current mission trends than much of today's mission literature. For example, a reading of his chapter on "Christian Presence" implicitly undermines the basis for the continuation of Western short-term mission programs.

Second, peace studies continue to be understudied and underutilized in the field of missiology. One is hard-pressed to find a mission theology text that deals substantively with the themes of violence, peace, and reconciliation.³ If the issues are raised, they are treated as only relevant to specific contexts, but most often remain marginal to the nature of the Gospel and, as a result, tangential to missiology. In this volume, however, peace is part and parcel of Yoder's framework and thus is an important resource for scholars seeking to create a more robust mission theology and ecclesiology, wedded to biblical shalom.

Third, within the last two decades migration has become a significant theme in theological and missiological circles. Yoder's treatment of "migration evangelism" in the appendix "As You Go" provides one of the most compelling bases for the biblical and historical link between the migration of communities along economic and social networks and the expansion of the Christian faith. In many ways, Yoder's thinking serves as precursor to Jehu J. Hanciles's arguments in *Beyond Christendom* regarding globalization, migration, and the transformation of the West.⁴

The most significant contribution of the book, however, is perhaps lost in the title itself: a mission theology from a "Believers Church Perspective." Readers may assume that most mission theology has been (or should be) worked out within a particular ecclesial tradition. But that is not the case. As Wilbert R. Shenk has argued elsewhere, Protestants have generally approached theologies of mission independent of particular theological and ecclesial traditions. The implicit assumption is that there is a generic theology of mission independent of ecclesiology. So for example, other than a few Catholic texts, one will not find a Lutheran- or Presbyterian-shaped mission theology. Yoder's thinking contributes to filling those lacunae by asking, Does the believers church have something to say about mission theology? Yoder's answer is, of course, "Yes!" Toward that end, almost every chapter offers concrete proposals for how one might work out the answer to such a question. The true genius of the book is a methodological model for constructing an integrative approach—one that probes the usefulness

3. One example can be found in Andrew Kirk's chapters on violence and reconciliation. See, Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

4. Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008).

of any theology of mission based on the rootedness and missiological significance of its ecclesial tradition.

Fuller Theological Seminary

MATTHEW KRABILL

Participating Witness: An Anabaptist Theology of Baptism and the Sacramental Character of the Church. By Anthony G. Siegrist. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications. 2013. Pp. 198. \$24.

In this carefully argued essay Anthony Siegrist offers an ecumenically sensitive, ecclesially self-critical, and unapologetic theology of believer's baptism. He hopes that a stronger vision for the unity of the church and a renewed witness to believer's baptism among contemporary North American Anabaptists might help local churches of various denominations "maintain integrity" in countries where the church is "disestablished" in relation to the state.

Siegrist grounds his proposals regarding baptismal practices, enumerated in the final chapter, in a rich theology of the church and its sacramental character. Because of its theological depth along with practical implications this monograph has the potential both to further scholarly ecumenical conversation and to help pastors deepen the understanding and practices of baptism in believer's church traditions.

Siegrist, who is from the Swiss Mennonite tradition in the United States and now teaches in Alberta, Canada, is convinced that believer's baptism must be reconceived. He is concerned that in some congregations associated with the Anabaptist tradition children have been baptized as young as 9 or 10 years of age, which is "a crucial distortion in the implementation of believers baptism" (26). Such baptisms seem to assume that children are in danger of divine judgment and will not be saved without baptism. In addition, it is "difficult to understand how a child is capable of making a non-coerced confession of faith" (15).

This critique is familiar to Anabaptists. What Siegrist particularly contributes is contextual and theological reflection regarding baptism from another angle. He writes that this tradition's "working theology of baptism suffers from a deficient account of divine action, especially as mediated through the church," and he wants to "develop resources to mend this weakness" (x).

Siegrist draws upon the theology of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder to demonstrate how "believers baptism need not be allergic to a strong view of the primacy of God's grace" (47) while still valuing the voluntary dimension of baptism—the believer's promise to follow Christ in life even at great cost, including potential conflicts with family or state. While these theologians hold the view that baptism is "the product of God's work and human freedom," Siegrist believes many Anabaptists are not clear about *how* God participates in the act of baptism. He notes that Barth and Yoder emphasize the narrative character of biblical faith and suggests that this narrative of God's relationship with humanity should structure our language when we talk about how God works through the church's sacraments. We should do this rather than appeal to

sociology, as Yoder does in *Body Politics*, or to a “highly developed theology of the sacraments or semiotic theory.” We should recognize that God enables human freedom “primarily, though not exclusively, through the church” (49).

Siegrist believes that “Anabaptist communities need to express more clearly how the church mediates the presence and work of God” (27). Their confessions of faith assert “the voluntary power of the individual” (25) but do not adequately speak of the formational dimension of faith in the context of the church. They do not speak directly enough of God’s grace embodied in the “ark of the gathered community” as the various elements of baptism, including its formational dimensions, “together participate in the work of the body of Christ” (161). While Anabaptists have emphasized that the church mediates God’s action in forgiving and disciplining, expecting members to live out their promises of discipleship to Jesus, their theology does not speak as clearly about mediating God’s welcome or nurture.

Siegrist proposes the phrase *participating witness* as a shorthand for a renewed understanding of baptism, a revision of the view of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist Pilgram Marpeck. Siegrist emphasizes that “baptism encapsulates the nature of the Christian life as something neither passive nor self-generating. Baptism is a focal image of the Christian experience in the way it brings together the subjective and objective characteristics of this way of life” (161-162). A theology of participating witness corrects an overemphasis on human action and religious individualism by affirming “that the church’s life is in some sense sacramental, that it constitutes God’s effective presence in the world” (xxii).

Siegrist argues that Anabaptist theology today needs a stronger pneumatology—the presence of the risen Christ or the active Spirit of Christ in the church. This could, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s experience recounted in *Life Together* illustrated, display “the sacramental character of the church as the community through which Christ now acts” (64). For example, baptism witnesses to the work of Christ in each person who is baptized and it is an action of the church “through which God’s restoration effectively proceeds” (102). Baptism does something: “Through ecclesial participation in the life of Christ” baptism becomes “God’s reclamation of humanity” (71). Baptism “changes the social landscape, which is to say that it participates in God’s restoration of community” (77) and witnesses to it.

To be baptized, to baptize, or to affirm baptism is to participate in the ongoing apocalyptic life of Jesus of Nazareth. It is to be brought into the concrete presence of Christ in the world and to be transformed into a member of that presence—to be as Scripture says in an impossible metaphor, “living stones” (103).

But this strong ecclesiology is also problematic. The impurity of the church—in both Anabaptist and other embodiments—would seem to undercut its sacramental character. Siegrist is deeply aware of this contradiction and notes that it is better to say “the life of the church is included in the life of Christ” than to simply equate the two (98). But he also thinks that the presence of recognized sin in the church is “an opportunity for the Spirit working in, with, and under the life of the community to form it into the likeness of Christ” (100).

This includes delineating where Anabaptists see the Spirit's presence even in an impure church in a "manner less triumphalist and divisive than has previously been the case" (148). Siegrist's project is "deliberately interwoven with ecumenical threads" given this "age of dying denominationalism" (xii) and new initiatives of repentance and reconciliation between denominations, specifically those at the international level between Mennonites and the Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic communions. He is particularly concerned about the way Anabaptists tend to juxtapose faithful Anabaptist Christianity and "the diabolic fall of the mainstream church." He refers to Van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror* as a book that has significantly shaped Anabaptist self-perception and spirituality in this respect.

Siegrist helpfully connects the history of persecution in the Anabaptist tradition with its pneumatically underdeveloped theology of the church. While the radical reformers understandably defined themselves in opposition to Catholic and other Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century, this lingering way of articulating identity is neither theologically nor relationally sustainable. It ignores the movement of the Spirit of God in converting and reforming people in other Christian traditions—both then and now.

The affirmation of baptism as a participating witness "requires an account of how this body has remained the body of Christ despite episodes of obvious discontinuity" (109). Siegrist outlines three markers of the Spirit's engagement with the world: conversion, unity, and promise. While these three are not new marks, he creatively describes how each has the potential to critique and illuminate Anabaptist accounts of the church's history and "how it could be that the Spirit could be present in the church at a time when its members were not only the persecuted but also the persecutors" (148).

Attending to *conversion* "highlights the agency of congregations and individuals" and reminds us we can affirm the Spirit's work in the larger church "without forgetting the violence of the sixteenth century" (137). *Unity in love* as a mark of the Spirit leads us "to incorporate repentance into the story Anabaptists tell about the church" (140). While Anabaptists must continue to say that killing enemies is wrong, it is crucial to recognize "that those who were martyred, whether Anabaptist, Anglican, Lutheran, or Catholic, followed Jesus while those complicit in their deaths did not" (142). The Spirit's role as *promise* means we are not only formed by the past but can look to the future, discarding "lenses that perpetuate unfaithful division" (148).

While Siegrist's theological argumentation is complex and scholarly, this book is clearly written and accessible to those who have some familiarity with theological language and conversation. The recommendations outlined in the final chapter can assist congregations in evaluating, conversing about, and developing sacramental life, among them: affirmation of the ceremony of infant dedication; being more intentional about the process of Christian formation involving service, humility, compassion, and communal discernment; enriching "inquiry" education for new attendees and those being baptized; and recognizing previous baptisms performed by other denominations when done "with water in the triune name, the God of the apostles, by a community

affirming the Lordship of Jesus" (170). Siegrist wants to guard against a reductionist emotional and individualistic understanding of baptism by steering members away from a "second" baptism when they feel the first was not meaningful; he is not clear, however, how in this case the pledge or subjective dimension of baptism is then to be honored.

Siegrist's theological project is significant for orienting leaders in the Anabaptist tradition who will help congregations deepen their understanding of baptism and foster ecumenical relationships. He rightly identifies an overemphasis on individualism at the expense of ecclesiology that has begun to affect many North American churches in the believers church tradition, especially those in urban areas and those influenced by evangelical revivalism, including more recently formed immigrant churches. Whether his call for a more pneumatically charged understanding of the church can help guard against the divisiveness over homosexuality, for example, remains to be seen. Whether and how Christians "remember their baptisms" will be crucial.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

GAYLE GERBER KOONTZ

Village among Nations: "Canadian" Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006. By Royden Loewen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2013. Pp. 301. \$75, cloth; \$32.95, paper.

Village among Nations is a long overdue addition to the body of work about Low German Mennonites. Ambitious in scope, the book covers the evolution of the Low German Mennonite diaspora from 1916 to 2006 (and if the conclusion is included, to 2012). Royden Loewen masterfully traces the movements of the approximately 250,000 descendants of the original 7,800 emigrants who left Canada for Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s to avoid increasing government intervention into their schools. Today, these descendants are spread across myriad countries, including Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, the United States, Bolivia, Belize, and Argentina. The three largest concentrations are in southern Ontario, northern Mexico, and eastern Bolivia.

The story of the Low German exodus out of Canada and subsequent "return" migrations is both "unique and universal" (11). Loewen guides the readers on a fascinating journey of a group willing to sacrifice economic success in favor of religious freedom. One of the work's central arguments is that the account of the Low German diaspora complicates Canada's idea of itself—as a receiving nation, not a sending one, and as an ever-benevolent host welcoming the world's weary with open arms. Rather, the story of the Low Germans and their emphasis on simplicity serves as a powerful corrective to the ubiquitous narrative of upward mobility and middle-class values. Loewen highlights the ambivalent place that Canada holds within this Low German grand narrative: it is paradoxically both "a land of social unrest and religious betrayal" and a "haven in a hostile world" (85); this tension is evident throughout as many Mennonites leave and return and leave again, seeking that elusive homeland that offers the best balance of material benefits and freedom of religion. He paints a picture of a people

committed to preserving an anachronistic lifestyle and willing to uproot repeatedly in pursuit of it. Loewen draws on a wide variety of sources to make his argument, including travel narratives of the early delegates who sought new lands, newspapers both about and for these Mennonites, unpublished graduate theses, personal diaries, letters, and transcripts from interviews conducted by other researchers. Ultimately, drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of the "imagined community," Loewen plays with the term, altering it to "imagined village," and he argues that the Low German Mennonites conceive of their world as a set of villages, spread over 100 locales, not as a set of distinct nation states. While they tend to be loyal citizens, their relationship to the state is a pragmatic one, determined by a mix of religious freedom and economic opportunity.

Even for those readers already familiar with the story of the Low German Mennonites, *Village among Nations* is sure to inform and delight. I was surprised to learn that it was apocalyptic concerns in 1969 that drove a group of Alberta Mennonites southward in an attempt to avoid the "end times" economy and a new world order that they feared was imminent (146). Loewen avoids a pitfall common among scholarship on the Low German Mennonites—namely, a tendency of many books and articles to read as polemics, in which the authors see themselves as either the defenders of the traditional ways or the critics of a people who have lost their way. Thankfully, he avoids this trap by neither glorifying nor vilifying the Low German Mennonites. For instance, though he acknowledges the propensity among some immigrants to abuse the Canadian social safety net, he does not exaggerate the practice (188).

The book shines most brightly where Loewen's voice seems to recede and all we see are the vividly conveyed images of the actors themselves, people scattered throughout the Americas, struggling to navigate the pressures of modernity while clinging to their traditional ways. Loewen rightly argues that what constitutes "traditional" is constantly being negotiated, and cites the example of the steel-wheeled tractors, machinery that was at the height of technological achievement in the 1920s when some Mennonites decided to "freeze" time and not modernize beyond them, thereby creating and enforcing tradition. The final chapter, in which he examines the moves of six women from Mexico to Canada, is the most compelling. In this chapter Loewen fleshes out the narratives so that the reader can picture the migrants as they go through harrowing trials that recall scenes from *Grapes of Wrath*. In his chapter about time, Loewen offers a sophisticated analysis of Low German conceptions of time. He argues that different media are used to reflect different conceptions of time: the diary reflects a quotidian understanding; the letter suggests the week or month; the memoir deals in spans of lifetimes and eternities; and the newspaper intimates sweeping epochs such as modernity and traditionalism (97).

The book will be a welcome addition to the library of academics and lay people alike, as it fills an obvious lacuna in the story of the Low German Mennonites and in Canadian transnational history more generally. Loewen's style is straightforward, and his occasional use of colloquialisms, such as "old-timers" (155) and Mennonite "swagger" (137), add that earthy appeal for which he is known and appreciated. He applies theory with a light touch, using it to

clarify rather than obfuscate, something all scholars aspire to, but few manage as adeptly. Finally, he concludes that the Low German Mennonites have inverted the biblical curse of being “scattered among the nations” and have come to regard it as a sign of being “pilgrims and strangers” on this earth—a Mennonite virtue that Loewen contends has all but disappeared from other Mennonite groups (232). *Village among Nations* is a patiently pieced together patchwork of memoirs, letters, newspapers, diaries, and the research of graduate students; what emerges from the many pieces is a coherent and compelling whole, the most comprehensive portrait of the Low German world to date.

Oxford University

ROBYN SNEATH

Why Cows Need Names, and More Secrets of Amish Farms. By Randy James. Kent, Ohio: Black Squirrel Books/Kent State University Press. 2013. Pp. 234. \$28.95.

Randy James, a longtime county extension agent for Geauga County, Ohio, gives practical insights into the lived realities of Amish dairy farms in that county through stories drawn from his interactions with farmers. Farm numbers are growing in Amish areas like Geauga Country while most other Ohio counties without Amish populations are losing farmers (2). James discusses topics related to dairy farming, many of which are also relevant for dairy farmers who are not Amish. Readers should learn about issues such as dairy herd health, manure management, dairy breeds, soil chemistry, and environmental issues.

There are several distinct themes in this book: the value of small farms over big farms; the importance of farming to the quality of life of Amish families; and Amish wisdom on the use of technology. James focuses on one farm family in particular, the Gingeriches, to illustrate these themes. James makes a significant contribution to the literature on Amish farming.

A major theme of the book is the social, animal welfare, and economic benefits of smaller, diversified farms over larger, specialized farms. James hits on the theme of small-scale farming so insistently that it may turn some readers away from the book. In a sense, that issue of scale is what is behind the book's title: “Why cows need names.” The naming of cows is a family affair and children often name the cows (70-71). James states that “assigning an individual name” to the cows “somehow also gives an animal moral authority and provides a powerful deterrent to wanton cruelty—a deterrence that is absent on enormous dairy farms with thousands of completely anonymous, sequentially numbered animal units” (70). He uses minimal academic research (228) to support his statements, perhaps because he feels that the university and agricultural extension system have brushed off the negative consequences of concentration and specialization (36; 187). However, it would have been informative to place his thoughts about the negative consequences of farm specialization and concentration into the larger context of research on these issues. It also would have been helpful to separate the scale issue from Amish farming in particular since his presentation intertwines these issues. He could have achieved this

separation by comparing Amish farm systems with non-Amish farms having a similar size and using similar practices.

Another related theme is the incompetence of government and how that mismanagement hurts small farms in particular. For example, regarding the current state of subsidies, he says, "we have paid these folks well to develop one of the worst cases of persistent adult diaper rash in history" (35). He also discusses, in what some readers would likely consider a rant, the incompetence of government as exemplified in a bill to ban horsemeat (122). He said he was dismayed when the bill actually passed in Texas and Illinois (156) and editorializes on how it will hurt both farmers and potential consumers in low-income countries. He repeats himself more than necessary on these themes related to government and the university.

James gives some general positive insights into Amish culture. James states that the Amish will consider what the ramifications are for the community when choosing to adopt different technologies (25; 174). We learn that the rules of the church (the *Ordnung*) are effective for each local congregation (24; 174). For example, James discusses the diversity in adoption decisions around bulk tanks among different Amish churches (25). He also connects these ideas about the social implications of technology to his own life, which may promote similar reflection on the part of readers. For example, he thinks it is important forgo having a G.P.S. device in his car because not having one means that he would have to ask for directions from the local Amish and build relationships while navigating his way (137). Although James does give some background on the Amish faith, many readers would likely benefit from more extensive background on the faith, culture, and history of the Amish to better grasp the meaning behind some of the stories James relates in the book.

James discusses some anecdotal differences between the Amish and non-Amish ("Yankee") farmers that highlight the frugality and resourcefulness of the Amish such as growing and preserving some of their own food. James works through the economics of the Gingerich farm to determine if they will be able to survive as a family farm (30). The author goes into great detail to nail down the finances associated with Amish farm implements that could be used to help other Amish families trying to discern if they can be economically viable (47). Some of the descriptions of the workings of an Amish farm were challenging to follow and visualize such as his detailed description of working with the Amish on threshing (81). More illustrations would have served well, as in his first book, *Why Cows Learn Dutch and Other Secrets of Amish Farms* (Kent State, 2005).

There is no doubt that James's connection to the Amish and his particular farm knowledge is unique and that readers can learn a lot through his experiences. However, it seems that James emphasizes his insider position more than necessary. By the middle of the book he is still mentioning his insider position (130 and 136) and says that his Amish contacts talk about their church rules with him, which he claims is a rare privilege for outsiders.

The importance of farming to these Amish families' quality of life and sense of purpose may be the strongest contribution of the book. It is especially touching to read about how farming may be passed on through the generations

within Amish families. James has a keen sense of purpose in helping Amish achieve these goals and it is refreshing to read a positive story about family farming in an era when most of the information about family farming is not at all promising (225).

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CAROLINE BROCK

A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for Animals. Tripp York and Andy Alexis-Baker, eds. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books. 2012. Pp. 194. \$23.

In his afterword to *A Faith Embracing All Creatures*, Brian McLaren invokes the rule of kindness as a spiritual practice that shapes our reflection of God's care for animals: "And when we apply the rule of kindness to our eating, clothing, and entertainment, we will lose our taste for certain foods and products. . . . Some of us might become vegan, some vegetarian, some more conscientious omnivores" (183).

McLaren's writing, on the heels of and mostly in response to Danielle Nussberger's excellent concluding essay, "Vegetarianism: A Christian Spiritual Practice," adequately sums up the best aspects of this excellent volume. McLaren notes that in his life he has, often inarticulately, taken small steps away from eating meat. He remains uncommitted to vegetarianism, "But I am more convinced—thanks to this book—that making that commitment would be a good choice, one that should be celebrated rather than criticized. I hope you agree" (182).

I do, but the argument that vegetarianism is a good and responsible Christian spiritual practice is considerably narrower than the wide scope promised in the title to this volume, and I can't quite decide if that gap is the book's greatest strength or weakness.

My indecision probably owes to the reality that it is exceedingly difficult to think about animals in our contemporary context. We are decisively past a time in which we think of animals as machines; but factory farming is arguably the one of the greatest moral sins in human history. Excellent essays like John Berkman's subtle "Are we Addicted to the Suffering of Animals," which is about factory farming, and news stories about Michael Vick may not convince us to stop eating meat, but they nudge us toward kindness and open up significant questions about our complicity. When *A Faith Embracing All Creatures* answers questions that we didn't even know that we had, it lives up to Matthew Halteman's optimistic blurb: "only a few [books] merit the stockpiling of a stash of copies to give [away]."

However, the same focus on vegetarianism as the *sine qua non* of animal care creates significant problems at other points. It leaves out a significant group of theorists and practitioners who want to consider other questions concerning animals—for example, the long history of domestication as a positive site of animal care. Is it possible to tell the story of a shepherd who protects and cares for her sheep, the kind of shepherd who would search for one missing sheep

from a flock of one hundred, in a way that both ends with slaughter and remains a good story? Should Christians think through the much greater numbers of domesticated animals on our planet as a sign of evolutionary success, of cooperation and community between humans and animals? This volume brackets these and other questions, and although I am personally disappointed by this inattention, I do not find this a failing of this volume. A slender volume like this one can only do so much and using vegetarianism as a theoretical starting point works well generally. A larger problem arises when vegetarianism overdetermines the argument. That happens at a number of points.

It happens throughout the volume when meat eating and factory farming are elided. It happens particularly decisively when Judith Barad argues that humans are designed to be vegetarians. A detailed and progressive argument from cultural evolution could be made, but such an argument is missing. Tripp York moves beyond simple assertion in his essay, which theologially considers the eschatological possibility of an end to predation. It's a beautiful essay devoted to imagining the happiness of animals as they pursue God's glory, but in the one footnote in which he considers vegetarianism directly he fails to consider the possible happiness of the cow.

Both York's and Berkman's essays are situated at the end of the volume, which is unfortunate as the longer arguments they make could have informed the assertions in essays that appear at the beginning of the volume. The structure of this book follows a Mennonite approach to doing theology, which begins with Scripture and then moves through ethics, theology, and spirituality. This ends up working against York's crucial statement that

by imagining that pigs should be named 'bacon,' or snakes 'belts,' or crocodiles 'boots,' or elephants 'circus entertainment,' or cows 'milk machines,' or rabbits 'safe cosmetics,' we make it difficult to recover adequate theological language. Is it not the case that the story of creation, as found in Genesis, Romans, and Isaiah, provides us with resources for naming animals differently than the above designations? If so, I imagine that the first eschatological act we must perform, as intimated above, is getting our language right (158-159).

We need to clear the ground of words like bacon, belt, machine, and cosmetics before attending to the biblical texts. Our prejudices about animals are simply too inchoate, inarticulate, and deep to allow for a simple retrieval of a peaceable kingdom.

Happily the vast majority of *A Faith Embracing all Creatures* works diligently and effectively to shape our language, imagination, and faith in ways that, if heeded, could shape both creation and salvation towards God's purposes. One of the most welcome ways that this has happened is in the selection of authors for this volume. Important animal theologians, including Carol Adams, Laura Hobgood-Oster, and David Clough, join an admirably diverse list of contributors. The biblical work is extensive and careful and covers much of what should be covered in thinking through vegetarianism in a contemporary context. An essay on purity law is probably the key missing piece, but the inventive and

imaginative attention to Jesus' diet in Steve Webb's and Andy Alexis-Baker's essays is worth the omission.

The book holds together as threads in a deliberate tapestry do. Like any work communally written, it has uneven spots, but the diversity of styles and voices make a multifaceted argument that is more compelling than one that Alexis-Baker and York would have simply cooperated on. This diversity is needed given the complexity of the topic, and they have succeeded masterfully. I look forward to further work in their Peaceable Kingdom series and to further attention to the web of life, the ways we find ourselves trapped in it, and how to extricate ourselves from sin and to move toward glory.

Conrad Grebel University College

TREVOR BECHTEL

Daniel Colucciello Barber. *Deleuze and the Naming of God: Post-Secularism and the Future of Immanence*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2014. Pp. 232. \$120.

The question of God is not one that can be answered with a yes or no. What is evoked instead is "the task of imaging a world, the task of world-making." With God—or at least with the name of God—"the stakes of world-making are pushed to the highest degree" (3). With this orientation Daniel Barber furthers his project of exploring the implications of philosopher Gilles Deleuze's idea of immanence in the context of religion and secularism. Barber challenges the notion that the critical question is between religion and secularity by claiming that religion (as Christianity or defined by Christianity) and secularism work under the same supercessionist logic that is able to name and position all non-adherents; as Christianity re-positioned Judaism and eventually non-Christian or heretical others so too secularism re-positioned Christianity and religion in general.

Thus, the question of God is not yes or no. The question of God is one of imagination, world-making, and politics. In *Deleuze and the Naming of God* Barber identifies the crucial element in this question as between transcendence and immanence; the naming of God remains operative on both sides. Barber lays out his argument in three movements.

Chapters 1 and 2 offer his reading of the Deleuzian project of immanence. Briefly stated, the emergence of immanence as expressed by Deleuze comes out of a medieval and modern question of how difference is understood and expressed. Immanence is a challenge to the prevailing notion of transcendence in the West, which posits another plane from which God, Reason, Nature, and so forth, establishes and maintains the order and distinctions of reality. Immanence denies the existence or appeal to another plane and asserts a single plane and substance of reality. Distinction and change in immanence come not from a prior unity but from the *differential* structure of reality. Difference is a key term. In transcendence difference is mediated between two planes. With immanence difference is an unconditioned function of reality that can only be expressed and re-expressed. These are dense chapters that will require patient attention,

especially for those unfamiliar with some of the larger philosophical conversations.

Chapters 3 and 4 bring elements of Christian theology into conversation with differential immanence. Chapter 3 responds to the theological tradition of *analogy of being* here represented by the work of John Milbank and David Bentley Hart. Milbank rejects differential immanence because he reads it as reflecting the pagan myth of original and necessary violence. Milbank offers an “ontology of peace” based on participation (via analogy) in the transcendent vision of God’s original order. Both Barber and Milbank agree that both positions are “unfounded,” requiring some sort of metadiscourse for appeal. Barber proposes that these contrasting accounts should be evaluated based on their ability “to imagine new possibilities of existence” (85). Barber claims that accepting Milbank’s model of transcendent participation in the divine *does not enable the introduction of peace but baptizes all pasts and futures as somehow affirmed in the present* (even despite their real violence). Chapter 4 asserts that theology need not be antagonistic toward immanence. Barber presents John Howard Yoder as an example of Christian theology that immanence is able to affirm. While Milbank suggests a transcendent alternative to the world, Yoder explores the particularity of Jesus “as the name of the world’s resistance to domination and as the capacity to produce a world that departs from such domination” (19).

Chapters 5 and 6 address the question of mediation in immanence. In transcendence there is the question of the mediation between two realms, the conditioned and the unconditioned. Immanence rejects this and must be considered thoroughly unconditioned. In this way there are not stable expressions of immanence that allow immanence itself to be an object of study (remember immanence is an understanding of relation not an object of study). In this respect Barber develops his notion of metaphilosophy that attends to philosophy’s (necessary) failure in trying to create (or recover) order from chaos. Through a meditation on shame and suffering Barber proposes that we must attend to what resists thought, what remains senseless. It is only through this practice of immanent attention that change is possible in contrast to the appeal to transcendence, which only allows us “to bathe and ignore the senselessness of experience” (168).

Chapter 6 then takes up the challenge of what it means to give attention to the present without escape to another world (whether religious or secular). One example is the life of Malcom X, born Malcom Little. Little did not change his name but marked the site of a name with an X. This X demanded attention to the present because of its constant reminder of a now inaccessible genealogy of his past, his marking under the Christian colonial naming in the present, and his refusal of effacing the present by taking on some eschatological future name. The X remained and resisted the present, opening new possibilities. Barber concludes the chapter with a section called the “Fabulation of Icons.” This section returns us to the opening comments regarding imagination, politics, and the naming of God. At some point all these elements converge on particular types of storytelling. We are told a story in which the question of God can be answered with a yes or no, but this story and others keep us from asking the question of

yes or no with regard to capitalism, nationalism, and other ideologies. In the face of these competing imaginations Barber proposes the act of *fabulation*, which “names the capacity to tell a story that outstrips the criteria that would decide on its truth or falsity” (200). A fable takes the materials of the present and creates an account that refuses the present criteria of truth or falsity and so opens a space for the new. These accounts come most clearly from a place of suffering because suffering demands attention to the present but is itself already outside the discourses of truth (inasmuch as suffering remains senseless).

This is an intellectually demanding book. It will likely prove the better of those who are not already invested in the work of critically examining the present discourses of theology and secularism as well as their attendant politics. But to the diligent reader there is a glimpse in this work of what might open up to those willing to re-configure and re-express the prevailing domains of political theology. To the extent that there remains a question mark over the current criterion of truth and falsity this book invites its readers to pay attention, to resist escape to another realm. To escape is to seal off the crack by which we might see something new; to remain attentive to the senseless sites of life there may yet come, well, I guess we will wait to see.

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DAVID DRIEDGER

Giovinezza di Rembrandt. La committenza mennonita. By Silvia Danesi Squarzina. Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte. 2013. Pp. 127. €20.

This small volume—in English, *The Young Rembrandt and the Mennonite Artistic Community*—recently published by a prominent Italian art historian marks the first time that a major figure in the art history community has made a sustained and credible argument that Rembrandt was a member of the Mennonite community during the early years of his career. The question of his formal membership in one of the Mennonite congregations is outside her field of inquiry. Her focus is on the relationship between what Rembrandt painted in those years and his involvements in the Amsterdam Mennonite artistic community.

Squarzina is a professor emeritus at Sapienza University, where she taught for many years. She is the author of a large volume of published work, all in Italian, much of it on seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish art. The book originated in her lectures at Sapienza in the 1990s. The volume includes sixty-two black-and-white illustrations and thirty-six color plates.

Although the question of Rembrandt's connections with the Mennonite community has been widely studied in the past, Squarzina offers five contributions to this long-running debate. The first contribution is to regard the evidence published by the seventeenth-century Italian art historian Fillippo Baldinucci as valid. In her view, “Baldinucci provides us with a view of Rembrandt whose importance and reliability have not been sufficiently appreciated.” She points out that Baldinucci's account is based on firsthand

evidence provided by Eberhart Keilhau, who spent two years studying with Rembrandt in Amsterdam in 1644-1647, followed by three more years at the "famous Academy of [Mennonite art dealer Hendrik] Uylenburgh," while retaining his close relationships with Rembrandt. Shortly thereafter Keilhau moved to Rome, where he became Baldinucci's informant. Baldinucci reports that Rembrandt

at that time professed the religion of the *Menisti*, which, although everything it holds is false, is however contrary to Calvin's religion because they do not baptize until the age of 30. They do not select educated preachers, but raise to that office men of ordinary status, so long as they are regarded, as we would say, gentlemen and men of good taste, and able to support themselves financially.

"Whether he persevered in his false religion," Baldinucci adds, "is something that has not come to our knowledge."

Squarzina's second contribution is to view many of Rembrandt's paintings, especially those on biblical and religious subjects, as autobiographical in content. She regards Rembrandt's paintings and etchings as products of deeply-held beliefs. To put it simply, she believes that Rembrandt painted what he did because of what he believed, and that his beliefs came from the Mennonite community. Much previous discussion of Rembrandt's relationship with the Dutch Mennonites has been hampered by a lack of evidence. Squarzina's approach offers historians a new body of evidence. Historians accustomed to relying on textual evidence may be skeptical, but the approach has gained credibility among art historians.

Her third contribution is to make a credible case that a careful reading of Rembrandt's work (and Rembrandt's images must be read, not simply looked at) indicates that many of them are comprehensible only when Baldinucci's report that Rembrandt was a Mennonite is accepted. Rembrandt lived at a time when a multilateral conflict was taking place that not only pitted fundamentalist and liberal Calvinists against each other, but also set both portions of the Calvinist community against the Catholic community, and both Calvinists and Catholics against the Mennonite community. To believe that Rembrandt would have been unaffected by the fierce religious and political conflicts engendered by this tangle of opinions would be unlikely, and Squarzina's reading of his early paintings indicates he was not.

Her fourth contribution is to establish the existence of a Mennonite artistic community in Amsterdam. The most significant portion of that community had formed around Hendrik Uylenburgh, and when Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam from Leiden as a young unknown artist he lived for several years in Uylenburgh's home. The existence of this community has been reported in earlier scholarly work, but its importance can only be appreciated when viewed from an art historical perspective. Squarzina states that in Rembrandt's paintings we find "justification for the thesis of Rembrandt's personal, direct adherence to Mennonite beliefs at a point in his life when he was surrounded by members of this religious community."

Her final contribution is to point out that all seventeenth-century artists worked in the shadow of the late sixteenth-century destruction of art in northern European churches. She points out that this not only destroyed centuries of accumulated artistic production, but that it also eliminated what had been the largest single market for artists. Even more important, the iconoclastic movement de-sacralized art, thereby transferring its ownership from the ecclesial realm, where they had been on public view, to the private collections of wealthy individuals. Squarzina believes Rembrandt's religious works were an attempt to re-sacralize art, by presenting Mennonite beliefs in images that its members could understand, but that would not be controversial in the heated confessional environment of the time. She states, "For Rembrandt, his paintings were the place where he could express his unconventional beliefs about individual conscience, and express his moral convictions, using the resources possessed by the artist."

She observes, for example, that Rembrandt's painting of John the Baptist preaching "provided the opportunity for self-identification by religious minorities who had no buildings of their own in which to meet, and who were accustomed to worshipping outside under the trees in the forest, and to freely choose their own pastors." She adds, "The autobiographical elements in this work . . . have always been recognized by scholars, but have never been considered in relation to his adherence to the Mennonite faith." Squarzina's knowledge of Anabaptist and Mennonite beliefs is necessarily limited but not inaccurate. She informs her Italian readers that Mennonites "sought to restore the Christianity of its time to the apostolic era, and to affirm the message of love found in the Sermon on the Mount."

Most twentieth-century Rembrandt scholarship has simply ignored his religious beliefs, apparently viewing them as irrelevant. This became the consensus view, and so this monograph represents a significant departure in Rembrandt studies. Squarzina is joined by at least one other major art historian, Arthur Wheelock, curator of the Dutch paintings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., who in a catalog for the exhibition of Rembrandt's paintings of the apostles that he organized in 2005, noted Rembrandt's connections with the Mennonites several times. There have been other recent indications of a readiness to look at Rembrandt's religious beliefs, but none have entertained the possibility that those beliefs originated in Anabaptism.

The fact that the two artists widely regarded as the greatest of Dutch poets and painters—Joost van den Vondel and Rembrandt van Rijn—were both shaped by the Mennonite community surely indicates something important about the Dutch Mennonite community and its contribution to the cultural flourishing of a seventeenth-century Golden Age. That this insight should have come from an Italian Catholic is surprising, but not unprecedented. It is consistent with the growing appreciation of the Mennonite tradition that has emerged in the Catholic community in recent years. Difficult as it is for her to understand adult baptism, which from her perspective deprives children of the grace of sacramental baptism, she nevertheless takes a positive view of Mennonites. That appreciation is summed up in the concluding sentence to this

book: "In many of Rembrandt's paintings, and especially in those that we have examined, the environment in which the individual acts has changed, thanks to the new opportunities for individual consciousness provided by a religion that believes in a free and informed will."

There remains much to be learned, both about Rembrandt and about the early history of the Dutch Mennonite community, along the path of inquiry Squarzina has pioneered.

Collegeville, Minn.

IVAN J. KAUFFMAN

BOOK NOTES

Living Gift: John's Jesus in Meditation and Poetry, Art and Song. By Willard M. Swartley. Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing House. 2013. Pp. 183. \$24.

In the course of researching and writing *John* in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series (2013), Willard Swartley collected a great deal of devotional and worship resources related to the fourth Gospel. In *Living Gift* he presents many of these items, organized in twenty-two sections keyed to portions of the biblical text, such as "John 1:1-18" or "John 16:5-33." Each section opens with a "Nuggets" heading in which Swartley summarizes major elements of the specific passage. Thereafter follow poems, hymn lyrics, responsive readings, full-color reproductions of visual art, short drama scripts, and brief meditations that connect to that section's biblical passage. Swartley is the author of some of the responsive readings and reflections, but most of the material comes from other authors and sources. The book includes topic, genre, and author indexes. The book would be a useful companion to a study of John in Sunday school classes or similar settings, and as a resource for worship planners and preachers working with the Gospel of John.

– Steven M. Nolt

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