Anabaptist Witness

*A Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Dialogue
on Key Issues Facing the Church in Mission*

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Omnibus Edition

Editorial

The image on the cover of this issue of *Anabaptist Witness* is a painting by our designer, Matt Veith, of a medieval church in Italy from a travel advertisement. The architecture—with the colonial-era buildings that bear resemblance to styles elsewhere in the world, particularly in the Americas—reminds me of a form of Christianity, and of Christian mission, deeply involved in European imperialism. The colors Matt has chosen are redolent of a sunset or an old photograph, perhaps suggesting an ending to this form of Christianity, consigning it as a relic of the past. Yet suns rise again. Architecture and the forms of life they express and engender endure. And imperial mission finds new life in travel, in advertising, and of course in the various modes of modern Christianity.

Although the essays in this issue were not written in response to a call on a specific theme, each of them wrestles in its own way with possibilities for a different, non-imperial form of mission—one centered in trust in God, in care for the marginalized, in healing transformation of conflict, and in resistance to injustice. Anabaptism is no stranger to imperialism, having been its victim and its agent—and sometimes both at the same time. These essays are born of that acquaintance and point to a more healthy and just Anabaptist witness.

Tim Erdel and Robby Prenkert anatomize one of today's leading justifications of imperialism—the doctrine of American Exceptionalism. Speaking in particular to fellow US American evangelicals, Erdel and Prenkert warn readers of the temptation to political idolatry, and call for mission to find its roots once again in the logic of the Abrahamic covenant, in which God's people are blessed in order to bless "all the families of the earth" (Gn 12:3, NRSV). "Nationalism, ethnocentrism, pride, or religious triumphalism," they write, have no place in Christian mission.

If heeding Erdel and Prenkert's call entails greater circumspection about the entanglement of mission and state politics, Johannes Reimer urges believers church Christians to get *more* involved in Russian politics. Situating his argument in a historical narrative of evangelical political withdrawal after Stalinist persecution in the 1920s, Reimer sees Russian evangelicals as having a crucial role to play in the pursuit of a politics of the common good in their setting.

The following two essays, by J. Denny Weaver and Dorothy Yoder Nyce respectively, suggest that attention to the shape and expression of our Christian convictions is a vital matter for just witness. Weaver takes aim at the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, judging that its lack of rootedness in the narrative of Jesus as a starting point for all doctrine allows the historic Anabaptist peace witness to become negotiable instead of being integrally woven into the

very fabric of the Christian faith. A new, Jesus-oriented confession would, by its nature, be a missional peace confession—one that compellingly announces the good news of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who lived a life of nonviolent resistance to injustice.

For Yoder Nyce, Mennonite missionaries who share about the goodness of God's creation need to review problematic assumptions about gender taken from misguided readings of the Genesis creation accounts. Drawing on classic and recent feminist hermeneutics, Yoder Nyce offers an egalitarian interpretation of the creation stories, an interpretation that affirms and values the full humanity of women.

Jonathan Bornman similarly points to another devalued group—refugee youth. Bornman delves deeply into the literature on mission, migration, transnational religious identities, and youth to sketch the initial lineaments of a missiology receptive to the gifts of refugee youth, who carry wisdom forged in the crossing of multiple kinds of boundaries.

Safari Dieudonné Kizungu was a refugee youth who came into contact with Mennonite Central Committee workers after fleeing Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. Now a therapist and peace activist in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Dieudonné shares his life story, including his struggle to embrace Anabaptist Mennonite teachings about nonviolent conflict transformation in settings of endemic violence and trauma.

In a concluding reflection, David Rensberger looks to Jesus's parable of the sower for missional guidance. Noting that "a seed can only produce what it is itself," Rensberger reminds us that "a reconciled, loving, caring, forgiving, peace-making, justice-doing church is the seed of a new humanity." Communal embodiment of Jesus's teaching is not an optional add-on to mission; rather, it is the heart of mission.

A set of reviews on recent books in mission history, theology, and indigenous justice closes the issue.

The articles in this issue were written prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 and its effects on global health and economics. Perhaps their provenance will make them feel remote from the setting in which you are reading them. But I hope that the insights they offer on mission—on a form of mission that has integrity in word and deed, a form of mission rooted in Scripture and the best of the Anabaptist tradition, a form of mission dependent on the Spirit of God—will be a salutary reminder that Christian mission can foster relations of care and justice, healing and hope across the world.

Jamie Pitts, editor

The "Third Testament"

American Exceptionalism as a Case Study in the Global Temptation to Embrace Political Idolatry

by Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prenkert

The doctrine of American Exceptionalism, given its many historic permutations, is not new. Many would label it primarily a political ideology rather than a religious faith. But the Anabaptist authors of this paper are deeply suspicious of an ideology that threatens to become a civil religion, and of the deleterious effects of that civil religion on Christian faith, especially an ideology/religion as potentially pernicious as American Exceptionalism.

This paper focuses primarily on claims made during the 2012 presidential race between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney about America's divine destiny and place in the world order: we suggest that (1) there was an underlying fundamental agreement between the rival candidates and that (2) these claims also had deep roots in American history.[1] Likewise, many of the same themes reappeared in the 2016 presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump; Clinton strongly affirmed the doctrine in a column she wrote about "American Exceptionalism" in *Time* magazine,[2] and Trump touted the slogans "America First!" and "Make America Great Again!" While Clinton rejected Trump's slogans—in part because they implied America had lost some of its

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2 Hillary Clinton, "American Exceptionalism," *Time*, October 24, 2016, 83, while Donald Trump's primary campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again!" implied that America needs to recover an exceptional status she once had but has now lost.

greatness—Native American clergyman, reporter, activist, and politician Mark Charles points out that there was (again) no real debate between the two candidates about America's uniqueness, just over whether America had fallen from its divinely ordered perch and therefore needed to be restored.[3]

Persons interested in the contemporary political debates during the 2020 election may determine for themselves whether any candidate is so bold as to repudiate the basic doctrine of American Exceptionalism, but the perspective of the present authors is that no major candidate for national political office in the United States is likely to do so, since repudiating American Exceptionalism would be tantamount to political suicide. One might as well refuse to play the national anthem, respect the flag, or recite the Pledge of Allegiance and still expect to gain a major political office.

Thus, while some of the discussions that follow are situated in a particular time and place, we propose that the fundamental assumptions concerning American Exceptionalism remain basically unchanged and that their ongoing danger to Christian faith is as serious a threat as ever.

1. Three Sources of American Exceptionalism

When Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney spoke at the Citadel on October 7, 2011, his speech dipped from several streams that flow into the grand river of American Exceptionalism—streams fed in turn by multiple tributaries. Three such streams arise: (1) from outside observers who have analyzed the American democratic experiment, (2) from the religious history of the United States, and (3) from the standard political rhetoric required if one is to be a serious candidate for national office in the United States.

1.1 Outside Observers Note That America Is Exceptional

One stream of American Exceptionalism is a kind of sociopolitical anthropology going back to Alexis de Tocqueville, who provided the first extensive foreign analysis of what he would call *Democracy in America*.[4] Tocqueville offered his own unique mix of description, praise, and censure—a fairly balanced, if occasionally pessimistic, enterprise of enduring insight. He seemed to recognize

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3 See Mark Charles, "The Truth behind 'We the People'—the Three Most Misunderstood Words in US History," *TED Ideas Worth Spreading*, TEDx, Tysons, Virginia, December 2018, https://www.ted.com/talks/mark_charles_the_truth_behind_we_the_people_the_three_most_understood_words_in_us_history.

4 See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Godhammer, 2 vols. in 1 (New York: Library of America, 2004). Cf. Hugh Brogan, *Alex de Tocqueville: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), and Arthur Kaledin, *Tocqueville and His America: A Darker Horizon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

that American democracy is, in some important sense, exceptional among the nations, or at least was at that time. But he puzzled over what might make it so, not settling on a single cause. As he famously writes,

> Thus the situation of the Americans is entirely exceptional, and there is reason to believe that no other democratic people will ever enjoy anything like it. Their wholly Puritan origin; their markedly commercial habits; the very country they inhabit, which seems to discourage study of science, literature, and the arts; the proximity of Europe, which allows them not to study these things without relapsing into barbarism; and a thousand more specific causes, of which I have been able to discuss only the most important—all of these things must have concentrated the American mind in a singular way on purely material concerns. Passions, needs, upbringing, and circumstances all seem to have conspired, in fact, to focus the attention of Americans on this earth. Only religion causes them to cast a fleeting and distracted glance heavenward from time to time.[5]

Tocqueville suggested, among other matters, that America has been spared the feudal background that haunts Europe; that America has a unique blend of public and private involvement and responsibility; that, for a civilized nation, America has a peculiar focus on the material and practical elements of life; and, more than anything else, that in America democracy and religion are mutual catalysts for liberty, while in France democratic liberty and traditional religion have been generally at odds with each other.[6] Tocqueville was less optimistic about the implications of slavery and the inequalities suffered by persons of African descent and by Native Americans. He also notes the belligerence of many Americans and their insistence that the American way of doing things is best, even if they may be ignorant of other customs and cultures.

This sort of Tocquevillian analysis may be on target, but it does not support a strong thesis of American exceptionality, much less superiority. The United States is different from European nations, and the differences may be scrutinized, celebrated, or criticized as appropriate. There is no normative claim entailed by this approach that would suggest the United States is a towering colossus with a divine duty to police the rest of the world.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor makes similar observations, with a more concentrated focus on the effects of American democracy and religious liberty on the rise of a fairly unique civil religion within American society that stands in contrast to an increasingly secular Europe:[7]

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5 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 517–18.

6 Cf. James T. Schleifer, "Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* Reconsidered," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, ed. Cheryl B. Welch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 121–38.

7 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 522–30.

Go to the church of your choice, but go. Later this expands to synagogues. When imams also begin to appear at prayer breakfasts, along with priests, pastors, and rabbis, the signal is that Islam is being invited into the consensus.

That means that one can be integrated as an American *through* one's faith or religious identity. This contrasts with the Jacobin-republican formula of "laïcité," where the integration takes place by ignoring, sidelining or privatising the religious identity, if any.[8]

Taylor does note, however, that, unlike Europeans, who today are uneasy about their heritage of going to war in the name of God, Americans caught up in their civil religion still tend to support their nation's military ventures unabashedly: "It is easier to be unreservedly confident in your own rightness when you are the hegemonic power. . . . Most Americans have few doubts about whose side God is on."[9]

1.2 Religious Roots of American Exceptionalism

A much older stream of American Exceptionalism is directly religious, with roots in the Puritans. Some would even point clear back to the writings of Christopher Columbus,[10] beginning before John Winthrop reworked a metaphor from the Sermon on the Mount in his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" and spoke of Puritan America as a "city upon a hill" (just before or while crossing the Atlantic on the *Arbella*).[11] Thus, in Winthrop's words, "The eyes of all people are upon us." Though the notion of a divinely favored nation that is a beacon of democratic freedom to the world is fairly widespread, today the idea that God especially favors the United States of America is particularly embedded in at least four contemporary religious traditions, two of which are

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8 Taylor, *Secular Age*, 524.

9 Taylor, 528.

10 Citing passages such as his final journal entry during his voyage back from discovering the New World (March 15, 1493): "I know respecting this voyage that God has miraculously shown his will, as may be seen from this journal, setting forth the numerous miracles that have been displayed on this voyage." Quoted in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 37. Cf. *The Libro de las profecías of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Delno C. West and August Kling (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991).

11 John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, ed. Perry Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982 [1956]), 78–84.

fairly marginal and two of which are now competing for a major place in the American political mainstream.[12]

1.2.1 British Israelism

To begin with, there are fringe groups that teach American Exceptionalism, including the peculiar offshoot of the Adventist family, known as British Israelism (or Anglo-Israelism), of which there are a dozen or so small denominations. Their central claim is that the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples (or racially appropriate Europeans, especially the British and Americans) are descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and also, according to some, that today's Jews descend just from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. British Israelism probably reached its heyday in the 1920s, when the various groups claimed as many as two million members, though real figures were probably in the lower tens of thousands. Prominent followers included one of their patrons—Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone and granddaughter of Queen Victoria—and William Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Some contemporary British Israelism groups—such as the Christian Conservative Churches of America and the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, Aryan Nations—now overlap with the explicitly racist and anti-Semitic Modern Identity Movement, with ties to the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi groups.[13] Because these groups are so socially marginal, they seem more like bizarre cults than serious threats to the mainstream of American culture and ideology. With a resurgence of Alternative Right ("alt-right") in recent years, however, the influence of these currents should not be totally discounted.

1.2.2 American Zionism

There is also the peculiarly secular religion of "American Zionism" advocated by maverick political commentator and Yale professor of computer science David Gelernter, who openly champions "Americanism" as the fourth great Western religion.[14] Gelernter insists that his is a "biblical religion," though he is apparently indifferent to anything genuinely transcendental or supernatural. He just

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12 Liberal Protestantism and Roman Catholicism have their own strains of American Exceptionalism, so they should not be seen as somehow exempt from these tendencies, even if they are not the focus of this paper.

13 See, for example, various works compiled and edited by J. Gordon Melton, particularly the appropriate entries in the *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 8th ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2009).

14 David Gelernter, *Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

wants people around the globe to believe deeply in the idea of America, which he summarizes as a commitment to the creed *Liberty, Equality, Democracy*.[15]

While Gelernter's proposal for a "biblical religion" (*not*, he says, a "civil religion," though surely it would be that too) of "Americanism" may seem a bit strange, it summarizes currents of thought that have long been invoked by politicians. He argues that Abraham Lincoln's late writings provide the greatest expression of this "biblical religion," at once completely nonsectarian—able to embrace all believers and even secular unbelievers (in terms of traditional religions)—yet also deeply rooted in the thought and language of the King James Bible. He writes, for example, that Lincoln at his death "became not only the greatest preacher and prophet of this new American Religion, but its greatest martyr. He made Americanism holy. He became the perfect symbol of man reaching uncertainly but stubbornly and inexorably for the just, for the good, for the Lord."[16]

Contrary to Gelernter's summary of Lincoln's thought, Lincoln was a humbler, subtler proponent of American Exceptionalism than were either the "Radical Republicans" of his era or many of the Confederate leaders, but some of his writings do seem to invite mis-readings.

While there is no evidence of an institutional church that has arisen from Gelernter's proposal, one would be hard-pressed to find a clearer summary of popular sentiments that are in fact held by many millions of citizens across the United States. Political commentator Andrew J. Bacevich calls this doctrine of American Exceptionalism the "Third Testament" of the American Bible. "The Hebrew Bible," he states, "provides no evidence to support this proposition. Nor do the teachings of Jesus Christ and his disciples. Yet the American Bible incorporates a de facto Third Testament, which validates this assertion of American uniqueness."[17]

A made-in-America religion, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as "Mormons," hereafter LDS), professes to provide a *literal* Third Testament that fully supports the doctrine of American Exceptionalism—namely, the *Book of Mormon*, at least if one accepts what has now become the official interpretation of the *Book of Mormon* by many LDS leaders.

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15 Gelernter; see the overview of his argument in chap. one, "I Believe in America," 1–20.

16 Gelernter, 128–29. Gelernter's fifth and longest chapter (of eight) is on Lincoln—"Abraham Lincoln, America's Last and Greatest Founding Father," 103–46, in which he extols Lincoln's role in the founding of "Americanism."

17 Andrew J. Bacevich, "America: With God on Our Side," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 2011, http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/16/opinion/la-oe-bacevich-american-exceptionalism-20111016.

1.2.3 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)

Another religious tributary of American Exceptionalism now flows from the official teachings of the LDS, however ironic such a stance is for a formerly marginal group that once fled from the Midwest heartland to eke out an existence in the Western desert. Prominent LDS leaders are unequivocal in their interpretation of the *Book of Mormon* and related texts such as *The Doctrine and Covenants*, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*,[18] *Discourses of Brigham Young*,[19] *Journal of Discourses*,[20] and *The Gospel Kingdom*.[21] Whether by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve,[22] by President N. Eldon Tanner,[23] by President Ezra Taft Benson,[24] by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve,[25] or the like, in speech after speech and article after article, LDS spokespersons teach similar themes, grounding their claims in the aforementioned documents.[26] The Holy Spirit, they assert, inspired Columbus, the pilgrims, the Puritans, and the Founding Fathers, guiding the development of the United States of America such that its founding documents are religiously authoritative, and the divine purpose for the United States gives it an absolutely unique

18 Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* Taken from His Sermons and Writings as They Are Found in *the* Documentary History and Other Publications *of the* Church and Written or Published in *the* Days *of the Prophet's* Ministry, with Joseph Field Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938).

19 Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, with John Andreas Whidtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1925).

20 Brigham Young et al., *Journal of Discourses*, ed. George D. Watt, 26 vols. (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University, 1956 [1974, a reprint of the 1854–1886 London edition]).

21 John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1944).

22 L. Tom Perry, "God's Hand in the Founding of America," New Era, July 1976, from an address at Brigham Young University, 24 February 1976, http://www.lds.org/new-era/1976/07/gods-hand-in-the-founding-of-america?lang=eng.

23 N. Eldon Tanner, "If They Will But Serve the God of the Land," New Era, July 1976, from a speech in April 1976, http://www.lds.org/ensign/1976/05/if-they-will-but-serve-the-god-of-the-land?lang=eng.

24 Ezra Taft Benson, "Our Divine Constitution," Ensign, November 1987, http://www.lds.org/ensign/1987/11/our-divine-constitution?lang=eng.

25 Dallin H. Oaks, "The Divinely Inspired Constitution," Ensign, February 1992, http://www.lds.org/ensign/1992/02/the-divinely-inspired-constitution?lang=eng.

26 With the LDS doctrine of continuing revelation, the teachings of contemporary LDS leaders carry the same authoritative force as Scripture.

place among the nations of this world. As recorded in the *Book of Mormon* and *Doctrine and Covenants*, this was all divinely prophesied ages ago.[27]

1.2.4 Evangelical Fundamentalists

Finally, American Exceptionalism remains fairly pervasive in certain evangelical circles, particularly fundamentalist ones influenced by the orbit of Bob Jones University, by home school curricula from Abeka, and by the writings of David Barton and Peter A. Lillback, among others.[28] Such sentiments won Glenn Beck—an unapologetic convert to the LDS—a standing ovation when he delivered his commencement address at Liberty University on May 15, 2010. "It is God's finger," Beck claimed in his graduation speech, "that wrote the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*. This is God's Country. These are God's rights. . . . Protect them and stand with Him."[29]

So the LDS and evangelical fundamentalists find common ground in the religious doctrine of American Exceptionalism. LDS and evangelical communities each have major stakes in the US political process, particularly on the Republican side.

1.3 The Political Rhetoric of American Exceptionalism

A third stream is politically ambitious in ways that Machiavelli would presumably recognize and has long been the mainstay of persons seeking higher office in the United States.[30] This form of American Exceptionalism insists that the

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27 Some key passages from *The Book of Mormon* and *The Doctrine and Covenants* that supposedly predict and support the doctrine of American Exceptionalism—often being seen as prophetic predictions of a land of promise, of the founding of the United States, of the kind of government it would have, of the Constitution, and so forth—include the following: 1 Nephi 9:6; 13:10–19, 34, 39–41; 18:23; 2 Nephi 1:5–8, 10, 11; 10:11; Mosiah 29:23–26, 34; 3 Nephi 15:21; 17:16–17; 21:4; Ether 2:10, 12; 6:4, 12; Doctrine and Covenants 98:5–8, 10; 101:77–80; 109:54; 134:1, 2, 5.

28 Cf. John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), especially his discussion in chap. 4, "History for the Faithful: The Contemporary Defenders of Christian America," 57–76. Cf. Thomas W. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic, 2010).

29 Listen to Glenn Beck's entire address at https://www.mediamatters.org/glenn-beck/beck-liberty-gods-finger-wrote-declaration-independence-and-constitution-gods-country.

30 Cf. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince: With Selections with the Discourses*, trans. and ed. Daniel Donno (New York: Bantam, 1966).

United States has some sort of "Manifest Destiny"[31] and is "the last best hope of earth" (in the words of Abraham Lincoln from his annual message to Congress, December 1, 1862[32]); therefore, it is by Providential design the greatest nation on earth, with a singular duty and purpose that must be maintained at all costs.

Here religious language seems to have been hijacked for political interests, although the sense of God seems to be some sort of vague deism as opposed to designating a specific deity such as the Hebrew Yahweh, the Christian Trinity, or the Muslim Allah. But, however religiously generic or amorphous, to dare to repudiate these claims would presumably be to commit political suicide. So, for example, Ron Paul was roundly booed in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on January 16, 2012, at a debate for Republican presidential hopefuls when he suggested the United States should conduct foreign policy with the Golden Rule in mind. The crowd's response echoed the merciless ridicule that Jimmy Carter received for trying, however briefly and ineffectively, to make moral criteria the guiding principles of American foreign policy. Moments after the boos at Paul's comment, Newt Gingrich won wild applause by quoting Andrew Jackson concerning what one should do with one's enemies: "Kill them!"[33]

Despite frequent attempts to clothe the position of American Exceptionalism in at least quasi-religious language (as when Ronald Reagan perennially invoked John Winthrop's language with his own favorite phrase for America, "a shining city upon a hill,"[34] or when George W. Bush described America using

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31 Julius W. Pratt, "The Origin of 'Manifest Destiny,'" *American Historical Review* 32.4 (July 1927): 795–98. The phrase was presumably coined by the journalist John L. O'Sullivan in the service of those favoring the aggressive expansion of Jacksonian democracy.

32 See Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), and Galernter, *Americanism*, 103–46. Cf. Mark A. Noll, "The Perplexing Faith of Abraham Lincoln: His Manifest Trust in God, Alongside His Unconventional Piety, Confounds Us Still," *Christianity Today*, February 15, 1985, 12–16, and Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

33 On Ron Paul, see Saul Relative, "Christian Conservative Voters Boo Ron Paul's 'Golden Rule,'" *Yahoo! News*, January 19, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20121102141347/http://news.yahoo.com/christian-conservative-voters-boo-ron-pauls-golden-rule-011800008.html.

34 From Ronald Reagan's farewell address to the nation, January 11, 1989, "I've spoken of the shining city all my political life." Cf. Michael Reagan, *The City on a Hill: Fulfilling Ronald Reagan's Vision for America*, with Jim Denney (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), and Amos Kiewe, *A Shining City on a Hill: Ronald Reagan's Economic Rhetoric*, 1951–1989, with Davis W. Houck (New York: Praeger, 1991).

language attributed elsewhere to the divine Logos[35]), the need to assert it is ultimately based on a political question—does one intend to be a viable candidate for high office or not?[36]

2. Converging Streams

Both national political rhetoric and religious teachings that assert American Exceptionalism assume a unique mandate for the United States—a divinely appointed place among nations that this singularly favored nation has a duty to sustain by economic might and military force. Both give rise to earnest civil religion. Both the political and religious streams feeding American Exceptionalism are much more triumphal and prescriptive than the Tocquevillean stream and are laden with imperatives that carry aggressive implications for United States foreign policy. Hence, Romney's uncompromising stand at the Citadel:

> I am guided by one overwhelming convictional passion: This century must be an American century. In an American century, America has the strongest economy and the strongest military in the world. In an American century, America leads the free world and the free world leads the entire world.
>
> God did not create this country to be a nation of followers. America is not destined to be one of several equally balanced global powers. America must lead the world. . . .
>
> Let me make this very clear. As President of the United States, I will devote myself to an American century. And I will never, ever apologize for America.
>
> Some may ask, "Why America? Why should America be any different than scores of other countries around the globe?"
>
> I believe we are an exceptional country with a unique destiny and role in the world.[37]

Romney went on to stress that the United States is not just exceptional in the way any great country such as Great Britain might think itself exceptional. Rather, the United States is absolutely unique because of a destiny that goes back to Abraham Lincoln, back to the Founding Fathers, and, ultimately—giv-

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35 From George W. Bush's speech on September 11, 2002, with the Statue of Liberty in the background, evoking the language of the prologue in John 1: The "ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it."

36 See Bacevich, "America."

37 Mitt Romney, "Text of Mitt Romney's Speech on Foreign Policy at The Citadel," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 7, 2011, http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2011/10/07/text-of-mitt-romneys-speech-on-foreign-policy-at-the-citadel.

en Romney's earlier premises and the history of American political rhetoric—back to God himself.[38] So, Romney pointed out, America has a divine duty to economic and military might in order to fulfill its destiny as the leader of the world: "If America is the undisputed leader of the world, it reduces our need to police a more chaotic world."[39] And if American Exceptionalism brings special duties, it also carries special privileges. The United States of America never need apologize. The United States may act unilaterally. "But know this: while America should work with other nations, we always reserve the right to act alone to protect our vital interests."[40]

Romney said what virtually every candidate for high office in the United States feels obligated to say if she or he has any hope of being taken seriously by the American electorate. Thus, it is no accident that Robert Kagan, author of *The World America Made*, is lauded both by Romney, who named him a special advisor, and by President Barack Obama, who devoted precious time with television news anchors (just minutes before his State of the Union address) to praise Kagan's book.[41] Nor is it an accident that on May 23, 2012, President Obama gave a graduation speech at the Air Force Academy that deliberately echoed what Mitt Romney had said at the Citadel, saying such things as, "The United States has been, and will always be, the one indispensable nation in world affairs. This is one of many examples of why America is exceptional." Obama went on to invoke repeatedly the language of an "American century," again echoing Romney.[42]

This blend of religion and politics gives rise to the ideology of American Exceptionalism, the doctrine of a divine purpose for the United States in the world

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38 This sort of genealogical claim seems to be committing the genetic fallacy.

39 Romney, "Text of Mitt Romney's Speech."

40 Romney, "Text of Mitt Romney's Speech." As Cristian Mihut noted when reading an earlier draft of this paper, "Suppose America has a divine mandate in virtue of its genealogy. One would expect next that the content of the mandate for this nation would also be filled out by biblical prescriptions. For instance, being first in the Kingdom of God entails *service, longsuffering, humility, patience*, and *consistent love*. What is striking in Romney's address is that the content he gives to the 'divine' mandate is *entirely* bathed in the language of self-interested protectionism and self-promotion. In other words, Romney draws on a divine genealogy to justify a secular, egotistical primitivism."

41 See Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Knopf, 2012). Cf. Michael Crowley, "Hey, What's the Big Idea? How Obama Is Profiting from a Romney Adviser's Theory about American Power," *Time*, February 13, 2012, 16.

42 See David Nakamura, "Obama Touts American Exceptionalism, End of Wars in Air Force Graduation Speech," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-touts-american-exceptionalism-end-of-wars-in-air-force-graduation-speech/2012/05/23/gJQANN2zkU_story.html, as well as the transcript of the speech itself, readily available online.

that makes her superior to all other nations and puts her behavior beyond the rules that govern other nations. For example, the United States may legitimately build and maintain a giant arsenal of nuclear weapons—one sufficient to destroy the globe several times over—but a politically, morally, and religiously suspect nation such as Iran must not be allowed to develop a single nuclear weapon. Nuclear weapons are a force for good when placed at the disposal of America's God-ordained military but a source of destabilizing terror in the hands of less favored nations. Or again, the United States declares a war on drugs even as it exports tons of subsidized tobacco products to some of those same countries where it intervenes militarily because of drug trafficking. Examples could be readily multiplied. Some of the bitterest inequities are economic.[43]

Richard T. Hughes suggests that what we are here calling American Exceptionalism may be a complex tangle of six or more intertwining American myths that sometimes support and sometimes conflict with each other:

1. We are a chosen nation. We are the New Israel, or at least God's second favorite child.
2. We are nature's nature. Democracy and free enterprise are grounded in the natural order of things.
3. We are a Christian nation, with American ideals rooted in bedrock Christian values.
4. We are a millennial nation and will usher in a Golden Age for all mankind.
5. We are an innocent nation. Other nations may have blood on their hands, but our pure motives and altruistic intentions mean that we remain unsoiled when we engage in conflicts.
6. We are a nation where whites reign supreme. White supremacy undergirds the first five myths in ways that may not seem obvious to whites but that

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43 For films that document such atrocities, see, for example, *Life and Debt*, directed by Stephanie Black, with a script adapted from the award-winning essay by Jamaica Kincaid, "A Small Place" (distributed by New Yorker Films, 2001); *Don't Eat Today, or Tomorrow*, directed by Rob Hof (New York: First Run/Icarus Films, 1985); *Crude: The Real Price of Oil*, directed by Joe Berlinger (Red Envelope Entertainment/Entendre Films, with Radical Media and Third Eye Films, 2009). Cf. John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004); Edward Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, vol. 1: Clash of Ideologies, 1930–1980* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2009); Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prenkert, "Mentoring Marginal Men in Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica: Nascent Hoop Dreams and Nagging Regrets," *Anabaptist Witness* 3, no. 1 (April 2016): 87–103; Bryan Walsh, "Rain Forest for Ransom: Ecuador's Demand: Pay Us or We'll Drill for Oil in the Amazon," *Time*, February 6, 2012, 36–39; Moritz Thomsen, *The Farm on the River of Emeralds*, Vintage ed. (New York: Vintage, 1989); Gerard Colby with Charlotte Dennette, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil,* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995).

resonate deeply with many Native Americans, persons of African descent, Latinos, Asians, and other minorities.[44]

Some of these points are echoed in a more recent monograph by Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry—who underscore the depth and breadth of these beliefs and their impact upon contemporary politics—as well as in earlier studies by John Fea.[45]

Such sentiments inevitably work their way on down to evangelical students at the school where we teach—students who would presumably otherwise be horrified to be identified with cultish "Mormons," or sometimes even with fundamentalists. We see these sentiments every semester in the opinion papers we grade for various courses, and we hear them in class discussions. Here, for instance, is a frustrated comment from a middle-aged student, who has had an admirable, long-term interest in Christian mission: "I wish we could erect a wall ten feet high around the United States and live in safe isolation, but unfortunately we have to go out and police the world."[46]

There is such a bundle of hidden assumptions in this statement that it would take some time to sort them all out. Among them, presumably, are (1) that the United States would be better off without further contact with foreigners, and that the United States especially needs to stem the flood of illegal aliens who are surging across the border; (2) that the United States could, in fact, prosper without the tidal wave of material goods, services, and personnel it imports from around the world; and (3) that the United States has a particular moral duty to "police the world," to intervene in other nations' social, political, economic, and military affairs as it sees fit and for those nations' own good, as well as to bring its own national righteousness to them and spread the gospel of American democracy around the globe.

Or consider a response to the hypothetical question, "Is there something so important that it would be worth taking up arms for and killing to defend?"[47] Here is a student's reply:

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44 Richard T. Hughes, "American Myths in Eclipse," *Reflections: Yale Divinity School* (Fall 2016): 14–16; cf. Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By: White Supremacy and the Stories That Give Us Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

45 Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). Cf. John Fea, *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

46 From a student in a fall 2011 social studies course titled "Regional Geography: Latin America," Bethel College (now University), Mishawaka, Indiana.

47 Question posed to students in an "Introduction to Philosophy" course, spring 2012, Bethel College (now University), Mishawaka, Indiana.

My guns . . . if someone came to take my guns, I would be willing to kill to defend them. . . . I mean, we have a right to bear arms. It's part of our *Constitution*. . . . And since we are a Christian country, our documents are divinely inspired, so we have a duty to defend our rights. . . .

But I am a Youth Ministry major, and I am not sure what the Apostle Paul would say.[48]

Again, there are a host of issues to be unpacked here, but the one fascinating issue is the conviction that US founding documents were divinely inspired, parallel to Scripture itself—although, on second thought, that did not seem to sound quite right to the student. What is astonishing is the degree to which evangelical students committed to Christian mission and ministry have absorbed and internalized teachings that accord so well with the doctrine of American Exceptionalism. This is so even though their immediate source is probably a sincere, generic, somewhat confused, unreflective, religiously infused patriotism, or perhaps publications in circulation among evangelical fundamentalists enamored by the notion of a "Christian America"[49] rather than the LDS, unless they have been listening to Glenn Beck.

Nor are such sentiments limited to naïve undergraduates. The first student's sentiments about building a wall, a foreshadowing of a major plank in Donald Trump's political agenda, seem rather similar to those of evangelical theologian Wayne Grudem, who also seems to think America needs to police the world. Grudem's discussions of the issues surrounding illegal immigration to the United States from Central America never move to the level of fundamental causes. He never considers the possible role of US military and economic forces in upholding fundamentally unjust social structures over the past century or so, nor if those who sow the wind ever reap the whirlwind.[50] Consider further these quotations from Grudem's political magnum opus, *Politics according to the Bible*:

This means that *as a nation* the United States has formally declared from the beginning that God ("the Creator") has granted to every individual on earth

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48 In this instance, ellipses indicate oral pauses, not verbal omissions.

49 Again, see John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 56–57, as well as Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God*, and Fea, *Believe Me*.

50 See Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 387–435, 470–83, and 580–84. A poem such as "La United Fruit Company" by Pablo Neruda offers a radically different slant on the sources of military, political, and economic pressures that drive people to migrate. Or see the fine analysis of biblical teachings by M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

certain basic rights, including both "life" and "liberty." This implies that it is in our best interest and also *consistent with our foundational convictions as a nation* to promote the protection of life and human freedom in various nations around the world.[51]

It is wise to realize that *superior military weaponry* in the hands of the nation that protects freedom for itself and other countries *is a good thing for the world*, not a harmful one. The existence of superior military power in the hands of a peace-loving, freedom-supporting nation brings great benefits to the world.

Genuine peace in the world comes through the strength of the United States and other democratic, peace-loving nations. By contrast, US military weakness would simply invite war and provoke multiple attempts at conquest by aggressive nations led by evil rulers.[52]

The problem is that Grudem implicitly labels governments "good" and "bad," with the curious result that the United States is almost inevitably vindicated in her foreign policies, while rivals such as China are not. So China is wrong to make its presence felt so strongly in Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific and should be restrained from doing so,[53] while the United States presence abroad is inevitably benign and beneficial.[54] As Bacevich comments elsewhere about the underlying premises of American Exceptionalism: "So, whereas a single Chinese aircraft carrier poses a looming danger, a dozen American aircraft carriers make the U.S. Navy a global force for good. A brief Russian incursion into Georgia threatens peace; protracted wars resulting from the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan advance it."[55]

There is no reflection by Grudem on whether the United States may have in fact provoked many of the wars which she has fought, nor that she may well have participated in still other wars unnecessarily. The Vietnam War, for example, is listed by Grudem in the roll call of wars that supposedly gave us our freedoms, even though a leading architect of that war subsequently raised fundamental

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51 Grudem, *Politics*, 398.

52 Grudem, *Politics*, 399–400.

53 Grudem, *Politics*, 395–96. This is not intended as a brief for China, still less for its cruel Communist government. But not all that China does abroad is an unmitigated evil, just as not all US policies are an unadulterated good.

54 Cf. the very different perspectives presented by the films such as *School of the Americas, School of Assassins*, written and directed by Robert Richter, narrated by Susan Saradon (Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll World Productions, 1994); *Hidden in Plain Sight*, written and directed by John Smihula, narrated by Martin Sheen ([San Francisco]: Raven's Call Production, 2003).

55 Bacevich, "America."

questions about the purpose and conduct of that disastrous engagement.[56] There is also no recognition of the ways our "peace-loving" nation has almost continually engaged in armed conflicts,[57] often deliberately choosing war over other options, beginning with the War of Independence (rather than pursuing the Galloway plan[58]), nor how unwelcome US troops and US military interventions are in many countries, nor how their presence might affect missionary efforts by Christians who happen to be US citizens.[59]

Grudem writes with almost no sense of irony about the goodness of the United States in relation to other countries. There is no serious discussion of how "democratic" nations such as Great Britain or the United States successively became unrivaled global empires, other than the implicit *carte blanche* of divine Providence.[60] There is virtually no consideration of the great evils perpetrated upon indigenous peoples in the Americas,[61] of the slave trade (except to say that the Civil War was necessary,[62] itself a debatable proposition given that extensive slave trades were ended elsewhere without such wars), of repeated annexation

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56 Grudem, *Politics*, 74–75. Cf. *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, directed by Errol Morris, with an original score by Philip Glass, starring Robert S. McNamara (New York: Sony Pictures Classics, 2003).

57 See the *Wikipedia* article, "Timeline of United States Military Operations," which lists an almost continuous stream of military operations since 1775, even if one excludes CIA-based operations or conflicts where we merely gave aid, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_United_States_military_operations. See also the recent cover story by Andrew J. Bacevich that ties our penchant for nonstop wars to American Exceptionalism, "The Old Normal: Why We Can't Beat Our Addiction to War," *Harper's*, March 2020, 25–32.

58 James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 35–51.

59 See Timothy Paul Erdel, "The Great Commission and God's Righteous Kingdom," *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 16 (2008): 93–115; Timothy Paul Erdel, "Holiness among the Mennonites," *Reflections* 10.1–2 (Spring & Fall 2008): 5–42; Timothy Paul Erdel, "Is 'Just War' Still an Oxymoron?" *Criswell Theological Review*, n.s., 4.2 (Spring 2007): 53–76; and Timothy Paul Erdel, "Pacifism and Non-violent Resistance," in *The History of Evil in the Early Twentieth Century: 1900–1950*, ed. Victoria S. Harrison, vol. 5, *The History of Evil*, eds. Chad V. Meister and Charles Taliaferro, 6 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 163–83.

60 Cf. Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

61 Cf., e.g., a single case study of a Native American people (the Crow) who *fully cooperated with* the US government but still suffered irrevocable loss, by philosopher Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

62 Grudem, *Politics*, 42–43.

of foreign territories, of assassinations of foreign leaders, or of other callously self-interested interventions in other nations.[63] There is no acknowledgment of how our sense of divine destiny intertwined with a ruthless, if quasi-religious, quest for oil from around the globe.[64] If Hitler's attempted annihilation of the Jews serves to condemn Nazi Germany, which it surely does, then what is one to say of sixty million or more innocent victims since the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions on January 22, 1973? Grudem himself denounces those abortions and suggests that our nation stands under God's judgment because of them.[65] But this does not seem to dampen his general preference for the United States vis-à-vis other nations.[66]

When Grudem endorsed Mitt Romney in 2007, his statement enthusiastically supported his chosen candidate's "conservative political values,"[67] presumably the very sort of values that led to Romney's speech at the Citadel. Romney, like Ronald Reagan before him,[68] may have had a checkered history when it comes to the question of abortion, but neither he nor Reagan ever waivered in their "America first" approaches to foreign policy and the military. Likewise, and perhaps even more controversially, Grudem has been supportive of Donald Trump and his agenda for similar reasons.[69]

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63 Cf., e.g., Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times, 2006).

64 See Darren Dochuk, *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America* (New York: Basic, 2019).

65 Grudem, *Politics*, 177–78. This is just one of various conundrums one may find in Grudem. To take another example, Grudem has no problem saying that "raping is always immoral," even amid the extremities of warfare (429). We agree. But we wonder why systematically killing and lying to or occasionally torturing one's enemies are sanctioned actions. By what criteria are some "wrongs" (e.g., violations of the Ten Commandments) permitted while others are absolutely prohibited no matter the circumstances?

66 Though Grudem clearly and correctly says that to claim "the United States is always right" is wrong (*Politics*, 467), the general tenor of his analyses favors the United States again and again.

67 Grudem, *Politics*, 67–68.

68 On June 14, 1967, while governor of California, Ronald Reagan signed into law a rather permissive stance on abortion, viz., the "Therapeutic Abortion Act," so that legal abortions jumped from just over 500 to over 100,000 a year in the state. Later, however, he apparently changed his mind and penned a remarkable essay against abortion, "Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation," which first appeared in the Spring 1983 issue of *Human Life Review* and later was expanded into a small book.

69 Cf. the online commentary about Grudem and his support for Trump in a blog essay by Michael F. Bird, "Trump, Grudem and Hermeneutics," *Evangelion: A Post-Post-Modern Blog on Scripture, Faith and Following Jesus*, at *Patheos*, December 30, 2019,

3. When Does Political Ideology Become Idolatry?

Hebrew Scriptures are filled with examples of nations and their leaders who overtly worshipped false gods (whether Ashtaroth, Baal, Chemosh, Moloch, or the many gods of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt), who tried to thwart the expressed will of the living God of Israel (such as when Pharaoh would not let the people of Israel go), or who were filled with pride at their own accomplishments (remember Nebuchadnezzar), thereby failing to recognize and worship the one true God of the universe. The Prophets stress the sovereignty of the living God in the face of human idolatry.[70]

It may be easy to point fingers at foreign peoples who have proudly championed their own ethnic superiority and perpetrated its horrific counterpart—the elimination of "inferior" peoples ("ethnic cleansing"). Clearly things went radically wrong in Burundi (1972) and then Rwanda (1994) when tribalism (conflicts between the Hutus and Tutsis) led to mass murders and attempted genocides, those unspeakable tragedies unfolding in countries where the majority of inhabitants claimed to be Christians. Nazi Germany is a prime example of nationalist and racial ideologies gone madly awry in another so-called Christian country. One of the sadder side-stories from World War II concerns the number of Mennonites in Europe and South America who abandoned their traditional pacifism and hermeneutical suspicion of human governments to support the Nazi cause, some of whom participated directly in the Holocaust itself.[71] Is it not troubling that the doctrine of *Apartheid* in South Africa emerged as a peculiar variation of sincere Calvinism?

Here is a question for American evangelicals. How far removed is an overbearing *national* pride and sense of divinely supported superiority from that of a *racial* or *ethnic* one? If many American evangelicals are barely coming to grips with a long legacy of racial discrimination (or worse),[72] far fewer seem to have

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https://www.patheos.com/blogs/euangelion/2019/12/trump-grudem-and-hermeneutics/.

70 Cf. R. T. France, *The Living God: A Personal Look at What the Bible Says about God* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1970).

71 See John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite & Nazi? Attitudes among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933–1945* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 1999); Gerhard Rempel, "Mennonites and the Holocaust: From Collaboration to Perpetuation," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 84 (October 2010): 507–49 (cf. *The Mennonite*, March 2012, 17–22). Cf. Sally Elizabeth Erdel and Timothy Paul Erdel, "Nazi Nurses, Mennonite Nurses: Teaching Professional Nursing Values with Case Studies from World War II," paper presented at the 2010 Baylor Symposium on Faith & Culture, Institute for Faith & Learning, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, October 28, 2010, printout (photocopied).

72 See the autobiographical plaint by William E. Pannell, *My Friend, the Enemy* (Waco, TX: Word, 1968); see also Columbus Salley and Ronald John Behm, *What Col-*

any awareness of the history of US military aggression and economic exploitation overseas, nor how those actions might have become intertwined with the evangelical missionary enterprise.

The great English literary critic Samuel Johnson warned long ago in his sermons on pride that there is a direct link between pride and oppression on both the personal and national levels.[73] He was also shrewd enough to recognize and warn against the calamitous effects of military conquest, colonial exploitation, and economic oppression on Christian missionary outreach with the gospel:[74] "Interest and pride harden the heart, and it is vain to dispute against avarice and power."[75]

What do we say when the temptation is not so much to deny God overtly as it is to claim God as a kind of national mascot who sanctions dubious political policies, especially military aggression in the name of national defense? The United States military may not engrave the words *Gott mit uns* (God with us) on belt buckles such as Prussian soldiers wore in World War I, but a significant portion of US currency bearing the words "In God We Trust" goes to fund military operations at home and abroad. Furthermore, what does it mean if much of that wealth is generated by economic exploitation of weaker powers?

4. Some Missiological Reflections

God called Abraham out from Ur of the Chaldees in order to make him a source of blessing to all nations. This is but one of many places in the Bible, from Creation to Revelation, where God shows his concern for all nations in blessing (and judgment). Book after book in the Hebrew Scriptures underscores this theme, from Ruth to Isaiah to Jonah. The prophet Isaiah, for example, is called

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or Is Your God? Black Consciousness & the Christian Faith, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981). Cf. also Robert Coles, "The Inexplicable Prayers of Ruby Bridges," *Christianity Today*, August 9, 1985, 17–20.

73 Samuel Johnson, *Sermons*, edited by Jean H. Hagstrum and James Gray, the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vol. 14 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); see especially his sermon 6, 65–73. See also Donald Greene, *The Politics of Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1990).

74 Johnson's most virulent attacks upon European (including English) colonial conquest and economic exploitation and their insidious effects on Christian missionary efforts appear in his "Introduction" to *The World Displayed: Or, A Curious Collection of Voyages and Travels, Selected from the Writers of All Nations* . . . , compiled by Christopher Smart et al., vol. 1[of 20] (London: Printed for J. Newbury, at the Bible and Sun, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1759), 1–23. Cf. *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffé, written by Robert Bolt (Burbank, CA, and New York: Warner Bros. Pictures, Goldcrest Films International, Kingsmere Productions, 1986).

75 Johnson, "Introduction," *The World Displayed*, 10.

upon to live *naked* for *three years* as part of an extended warning to Egypt and Cush (see Is 18–20). The Lord's concern for the enemies of Israel is about as far removed as one could imagine from attitudes that would support nationalism, ethnocentrism, pride, or religious triumphalism. There are myriad biblical passages that underscore God's gracious concern for *all* peoples, for *all* nations.

The history of the modern Christian mission is haunted by the intertwining effects of Western military conquest, colonial empire, and economic exploitation.[76] This is especially evident whenever Americans listen to their sisters and brothers in the majority world.[77] It would be wonderful if, in the wake of insights from such anthropologists as Eugene A. Nida and Paul G. Hiebert, American evangelical missionaries no longer went abroad with attitudes so obviously marked by ethnocentrism, by national pride, or by cultural imperialism.

When will we finally examine our Americanism in light of the Kingdom of God? When will we finally recognize that pride, whether personal or national, is the antithesis of our Lord and Savior's own mission (Jn 13, Phil 2:5–11)? Evangelicals need to firmly repudiate the idolatrous religion of Americanism if their missionary outreach is to be in any sense biblical. "The Great Sin," as C. S. Lewis rightly called pride in chapter eight of *Mere Christianity*, is indeed, in his memorable phrase, "the complete anti-God state of mind." Pride, whether personal or national, should have no more place in Christian mission than it should in any other aspect of Christian faith and life. We fear that the temptation American Exceptionalism presents to many evangelicals requires us to remind them of basic biblical truths that should be self-evident but apparently are not always so.

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76 Cf. Timothy Paul Erdel, review of *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*, by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Faith and Philosophy* 28.4 (October 2011): 483–486.

77 To take a recent example, see F. Lionel Young III, "A 'New Breed of Missionaries': Assessing Attitudes toward Western Missions at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 36.2 (April 2012): 90–94. Or again, see the new monograph by David R. Swartz, who underscores how frequently the popular history of US missionary activities almost completely discounts the real roles, achievements, viewpoints, and convictions of persons from the majority world, in *Facing West: How American Evangelicals in an Age of World Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).*

Freedom, Truth, and Peace

Believers Church and Political Involvement

by Johannes Reimer

Believers Church and Party Politics

Christians have undoubtedly contributed to both democracy and peace in the world since the Reformation. This is true not only of Christian individuals but also of political parties formed by those individuals. Religious rights scholar John Witte points out in his book on Christianity and democracy, "Concurrent with this missionary movement [in the 1940s, 1950s, and beyond] in Africa, both Protestant and Catholic political activists helped to restore democracy to war-torn Europe and extend it overseas."[1] Such Christian political activism emerged among Protestants inspired by the social gospel movement and neo-Calvinistic teachings in many European countries and also in North America. Christian-Democratic Unions in almost all European countries are a classic example of this. Similar developments followed the encyclical Rerum Novarum of Pope Paul VIII, with its distinct Catholic social teachings.[2]

> Both Protestant and Catholic parties inveighed against the reductionist extremes and social failures of liberal democracies and social democracies. Liberal democracies, they believed, had sacrificed the community for the individual; social democracies had sacrificed the individual for the community. Both parties returned to a traditional Christian teaching of "social pluralism" or "subsidiarity," which stressed the dependence and participation of the individual in family, church, school, business, and other associations. Both parties stressed the responsibility of the state to respect and protect the "individual in community."[3]

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1 John Witte, *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993), 9. Witte refers to the missionary movement that followed the Second World War.

2 See the full text in English: https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html (29.07.2018).

3 Witte, *Christianity and Democracy*, 9.

Today, Christian parties operate in many countries of the world.[4] And active Christians are involved with a variety of political parties. This includes classic evangelical churches, which tend to support conservative, sometimes even rightwing, parties. Take examples in the United States, Guatemala, or Brazil.

Believers churches,[5] especially with an Anabaptist background, have also been involved in partisan politics, although rarely with major support from their constituency. Too often the membership of those churches adhere to nonconformist, apolitical teachings on the relationship between state and church. Any involvement in shaping and running society and state is considered theologically unacceptable.

As a result, members exclude themselves from participation in transforming society and lose the power to protect the poor and the needy, and even themselves, from evil political forces. I would even argue that they miss their divine calling to be God's *ecclesia* in the world, called out of the world to accept responsibility for the world (Mt 16:18) and to be salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt 5:13–15), making nations to become disciples of Christ (Mt 28:19). To be *ecclesia* means to shut down the gates of hell in a city, orienting and introducing the society to the values of the kingdom of God; that's what Jesus teaches his disciples in this passage and others.[6]

Ecclesia is and should be an agent of social transformation. Thus, political involvement by God's *ecclesia* is crucial. But does the church need parties in order to introduce peace and well-being to a society? Is party politics an instrument of her success? The Bible does not really teach partisan church involvement, so is the church not a party? Should she support her members in considering partisan political engagement as an arm of her mission? To encourage a debate on this issue, I will present a case of a believers church missing a historic chance to disciple a nation largely because of their nonconformist attitude and noninterest in a stronger participation in a parliamentarian democracy.

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4 See listing: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_democratic_parties (29.07.2018).

5 The term "believers churches" stands for churches that stress strict active confessional membership. In countries with a state-church past like Germany or Russia, such churches are usually called free churches, indicating their relationship with the state.

6 See more in Johannes Reimer, *Missio Politica: The Mission of Church and Politics* (Carlisle: Langham, 2017).

Giving Democracy a Face: A Russian Story

Believers churches involved in party politics can make a substantial positive difference, even when such involvement is possible only for a short duration. Here is an example from Russia to ponder.[7]

In 1905 the political situation in Russia was marked by upheaval, protest, and revolutionary, anti-tsarist movements. That year, leading men from the Mennonite, Baptist, and evangelical Christian denominations established the first evangelical Christian party in Russia. The party was named Union of Freedom, Truth, and Peace (UFTP).[8]

Historians call the years 1905–1907 "the first Russian revolution." At the beginning of that period, Tsar Nikolai II signed a number of decrees offering civil rights to his population. On April 17, 1905, he signed a foundational law of religious rights that granted all religious groups of Russia the right to freely exercise their religion.[9] Six months later, on Oct 17, he signed other laws as part of a so-called October Manifesto guaranteeing, among other things, the freedom of consciousness, public speech, and organization of social structures.

For the first time ever, evangelical groups were free to publicly confess their beliefs and to organize their own structures of public engagement. Despite massive persecution by the state, the evangelicals had grown considerably in the decades before. The change of legal status promised new chances for evangelism and church growth. According to the Soviet historian L. N. Mitrokhin, this motivated some evangelical visionaries to attempt an open political engagement.[10] The initial group of leaders included Peter M. Friesen (Mennonite) and Nikolai V. Odintsov (Baptist). They met in Sevastopol, Crimea, where Friesen lived, on October 21, only four days after the official release of the tsarist Manifesto. There they discussed and released the "political platform of the 'Union for Freedom, Truth and Peace' of those who oppose all violence and promote continuing progress in civil, economic and spiritual-moral matters."[11]

The program appears to have been discussed and prepared beforehand by Friesen. He had spent a quarter of a century, while also serving as a leading min-

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7 The term "evangelical"—in Russian, "Evangel'skie"—is exclusively used for free churches of Protestant origin. In this article, I use "evangelical," "free," and "believers church" interchangeably, fully aware that this may not apply elsewhere in the world, especially in Western Europe and the United States.

8 In Russian: Союз свободы, истины и мира.

9 Ukaz, „Ob ukreplenii natshal veroterpimosti".

10 L. N. Mitrokhin, *Baptism: Istoria I sovrmennost'* (St. Petersburg: RKHGI, 1997), 251.

11 In Russian: «Политическая платформа „Союза свободы, истины и мира" противников всякого насилия, сторонников постоянного прогресса—гражданского, экономического и духовно-нравственного».

ister, collecting and evaluating archival documents before publishing a massive history that was considered fair by all sides, of the Mennonite experience in Russia.[12] Fluent in Russian, he had many friends among Russian evangelicals. Since Friesen had moved to Sevastopol, his house had become a center of evangelical activity in the city. The city administration also watched his place.[13]

The foundation of the UFTP was announced in the local newspaper, *Krymski Vestnik*, spurring the local population to talk about the "Frizen-Party."[14]

Friesen saw the new freedom of movement in Russia and must have been concerned with the growing disability of his own denomination to properly reply to the winds of political change. He states that the vast majority of the Mennonites were less concerned with change, since they were economically far better off than the Russian masses.[15] In fact, most of them strongly supported the monarchy since it was the tsar who had granted them special privileges in the times of Paul I.[16] Consequently, they also supported political parties in favor of a constitutional monarchy, such as the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) or the Union of the 17th October (Oktobrists).[17] This does not mean, however, that Mennonites blindly supported all the injustice produced by the regime of Nikolai II as Soviet historians have again and again falsely repeated.[18]

According to the platform, the newly formed party proposed to support

- the constitutional monarchy,
- free election,
- the creation of area parliaments,
- a stable and uncorrupt government,
- a strong national defense army—excluding, however, any invasion into other lands,
- engagement for a reform of the juridical system,
- free education for all children,

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12 Peter M. Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Rußkand (1789–1910)* (Halbstadt: Raduga, 1911).

13 „Sektanstovo v sevastopole," in *Tavricheskie eparchal'nye vedomosti* 30, 1906, 1187–88.

14 Dikii, „K predstoiashim vyboram," in *Krymski Vestnik* 38, February 17, 1906.

15 Peter M. Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Rußkand (1789–1910)*, 525.

16 George K. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland*, Band I: Deutsche Täufer in Russland (Lage: Logos Verlag, 1997), 223–25.

17 Epp, 526.

18 See, for instance, V. F. Krestianinov, *Mennonity* (Moskva: Izdetel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1967), 36–39.

- a steady reduction of state subsidies for any religious organizations,
- the freedom to preach the gospel, and social engagement in "deeds of love,"
- freedom of speech, of conscience, of organizations and public assemblies,
- sufficient land distribution to farmers, allowing them a reasonable living and legal norming of large, private agricultural complexes.

The strong Christian character of the party was especially expressed by the statement in the last plank of the platform—namely, that the party aimed to realize all teachings of Jesus Christ and rejected all aggressive violence.

The majority of initial party members were Mennonites from the South of Russia, yet four Russian Baptists from Sevastopol are especially mentioned: I. M. Staroverov, N. V. Odintsov, S. T. Spak, and P. E. Judin. A board was formed consisting of seventeen members. The Baptist Odintsov and the evangelical Christian Prokhanov (later) were elected to the board, and Peter Friesen became the first president of the union. The central office was to be located in Sevastopol.[19]

The new party decided to join the planned election to the first Russian Parliament—the Duma. They appealed to the evangelical electorate with the following words: "Time is precious, and the matter does not allow any delay; therefore, let's build one holy and great family, joined by freedom, truth, and peace-loving instead of strife, stealing, destruction, and other similar disorders to which we are called by the anarchists and revolutionaries."[20]

The appeal underlines one of the major motifs of the initiators of UFT—the peaceful change of society toward democracy. Whereas anarchist and revolutionary movements proposed violence, the UFTP rejected any violent proposals toward a more just society.[21] This was, of course, deeply rooted in the confessions of all free-church denominations around the table. In addition, the party advertised as a non-ethnic, non-class, even non-religious, national party for justice and peace.[22]

The appeal did not receive much public support, however, which forced the leadership to slightly revise the program. On November 28, 1905, they made the

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19 Alexander I. Klibanov, *Istoria religioznogo sektanstva v Rossii (60-e gody XIX—1917 god)* (Moskva: Nauka, 1965), 259.

20 Klibanov, *Istoria*, 259.

21 Lew N. Mitrokhin, *Baptism: Istoria i sovremennost'* (St. Peterburg: RChGI, 1997), 255.

22 Peter M. Friesen, „Pis'mo v redaktsiu", in *Krymski vestnik* 44, no. 24 (February 1906).

party sound more specific and liberal.[23] The changes followed the program of the constitutional democrats (Kadets), obviously in view of joining hands for the election. Friesen himself announced the envisioned cooperation.[24] Further changes followed with the joining of Ivan S. Prokhanov, the president of the Union of Evangelical Christians. Prokhanov was well known not only among the evangelicals but also in liberal parts of society.[25] Winning him for the board seemed to promise more success.

The alliance with the Kadets, however, broke apart just two months later because of the obvious leftward move of the constitutional democrats—their support of the social democrats with their declared violent position, according to Friesen.[26] The Kadets, however, blamed Friesen for moving rightward and supporting those Mennonites in favor of rightwing monarchists.[27]

These moves did not stabilize the party. In fact, most of the Mennonites withdrew their support. In a December 12, 1905, article (published in February 1906), Friesen tried to convince some of them of the following: "Many will find our political program far too radical—on the women's right to vote, on the land question—but we are right in the center of the events; we see and hear what the people want; we believe (our program) is the very minimum of what alone can pacify them, and we find nothing here that contradicts the Holy Scriptures."[28]

But his appeal failed. The first evangelical party in Russia did not seem to support the Mennonites' specific ethnic or religious interests. And rich Mennonite landowners massively opposed governmental land distribution.[29] Plus, voting in favor of a strong self-defense force—the army and police—the rich Mennonites ran completely against their dogmatic convictions.

The other evangelical denominations might have been less strong in their support for the tsar, but political involvement as such was a strange concept to most of them. So support did not come from them either. Even with Prokhanov joining the board at the end of 1905 and with the revision of the program, the UFTP faded toward dissolution. This happened even before the first Duma elections took place.

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23 *Der Botschafter*, 14, no. 28 (November 1905): 2–4.

24 Peter M. Friesen, „Ot central′nogo biuro ′Soiuza svobody, pravdy i miroliubia", in *Krymskii Vestnik 298, no. 29 (December 1905): 3.*

25 *Der Botschafter,* 4.

26 Peter M. Friesen, „Pis′mo v redakciu".

27 Klibanov, *Istoria*, 317–20.

28 Peter M. Friesen, "Zur Geschichte der politischen Platform", in *Der Botschafter* 19/1906, 3; 20/1906, 2. Trans. Martin, *Mennonites*, 19.

29 See the discussion in Terry Martin, *The Mennonites and the Russian State Duma 1905–1914, The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East Euriean, and Central Asian Studies, 4, January,* (Washington: University of Washington, 1996), 18–.

We know little about the impact of UFTP. The last reference to the party was in 1906. The UFTP was obviously dissolved as a result of very limited support by their own Mennonite and evangelical constituency. And the party members themselves seemed fractioned regarding what a Christian party could stand for.[30] The Mennonites were involved in an intensive Duma debate in the years 1906–1914 and in experimenting with different strategies to politically secure their own status without establishing their own political party.[31] Peter Friesen's attempt to give democracy an evangelical-Christian face failed not because there was no need for such a voice in society but because of the inability of the evangelical constituency to enter the public space with political concepts reflecting both the context of sociopolitical reality and their own confessional stances. Most of the Mennonites, for instance, avoided any theology of community, merely seeking to protect their own interests.

A New Start in 1917

The dream of some influential evangelical leaders did not die, however. Ivan S. Prokhanov and a group of twenty evangelical Christians around him, just after the Duma phase (1905–1917), founded the party "Resurrection" on March 17, 1917. Prokhanov was elected president.[32] The program of the party was published in *Utreniaia Svezda*, a newspaper founded by Prokhanov.[33] It included a variety of suggestions for transforming socioeconomic life in the country, targeting especially the life conditions of peasants and the working class.

Among other proposals, the program suggested the following: a just land redistribution to poor farmers by de-privatizing state- and church-owned properties; support of the working class in their right to strike in a peaceful manner; legal guarantee of the eight-hour working day; full and equal rights for women; and equal access to education for young people. The program also supported the establishment of a "World Union of States" to guarantee world peace. Human rights—especially the right of freedom of speech and of conscience and of religious practice—were clearly stated and a de-clericalization and elimination of a state church in society proposed. The program followed the line of the UFTP but also expanded some issues in light of the new conditions.

The party program was presented May 17–25 in Petrograd to the delegates of the fourth Congress of the Union of Evangelical Christians. The congress did not follow Prokhanov's suggestion to adopt the party. To the contrary, their res-

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30 Nils Sundgren, *Gottes Volk in der Sowjetunion: Ein Überblick über sechs Jahrzehnte sowjetischer Religionspolitik* (Witten: Bundesverlag, 1978), 66.

31 See the discussion on the issue in Martin, *Mennonites*, 20–56.

32 *Istoria EChB v SSSR* (Moskva: Izdel´stvo VSEChB, 1989), 187.

33 *Utreniaia Swezda*, January 1917, 7.

olution clearly stated a basic rejection of engaging churches in politics, although it would allow individual members to get involved in party politics.

The Resurrection party was also declared a private initiative of some active church members.[34] For the founders, this meant a major disappointment. But Prokhanov did not give up on politics. The Resurrection party took part in the elections to the St. Petersburg regional parliament (Duma) with considerable success; it gained more votes than the Social Democrats with their candidate Grigori V. Plekhanov (1856–1918).[35]

Similar to the evangelical Christians, the other leading evangelical denominations—the Baptists and the Mennonite groups—withdrew from direct party support. The Baptists, for instance, in their monthly publication *Slovo Istiny* even interviewed their members as to whether or not a Christian should be allowed to be involved in politics. Responses were quite diverse,[36] but the vast majority rejected any political participation in principle.

Instead of joining Prokhanov's party, the leaders of the Baptist Union—M. D. Timoshenko and P. V. Pavlov—explained publicly the Baptist position on the matter, and Pavlov published their statement in an article titled "Political Requirements of Baptists."[37] In all its main positions, the statement followed the program of Resurrection, elaborating some details—on the right to a public burial, for instance—and stating clearly that a transformation of society is reached not by political engagement but through the changed lives of individuals.

It became obvious that evangelicals did not support partisan political engagement. One year after the start of Resurrection, the party ceased to exist. Even Prokhanov himself years later in his autobiography avoided talking about the two Russian parties he was instrumental in starting. He claims that he and his co-brothers decided to say "no to politics and yes to the gospel."[38]

For the Baptists, their founding president Vassili G. Pavlov (1854–1924) wrote in his famous article "Truth about the Baptists":

> We do not believe in any improvement of society by violent turnovers. The method of Christianity in this regard does not follow the ideas of science-cen-

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34 *Istoria EChB*, 187. See also Jakov K. Dukhonchenko Archive, File: „Periods 1917 po 1929 god" (Moscow: Archive of the Russian EChB).

35 Ivan S. Prokhanov, *V kotle Rossii* (Chicago: Vsemirnyi sovet Evangel'skich Christian, 1992).

36 Neotlizhnaia zadacha, in *Slovo Istiny*, April 1917, 63.

37 *Slovo Istiny*, January 1917, 1.

38 Ivan S. Prokhanoff, *In the Cauldron of Russia, 1869–1933*: *Autobiography of I. S. Prokhanoff; The Life of an Optimist in the Land of Pessimism, Together with an Interesting History of the Russian Evangelical Christian Union* (New York: All-Russian Christian Union, 1933).

tered socialists who propose to gain power and then reorganize society through directive laws. This is a method of revolution implying to introduce peace by using violence. . . . Our relationship to the working classes is determined by the gospel. . . . We must tell the people that a new age will only come through born-again people and that there is only one just Ruler—Jesus.[39]

Post-Soviet Evangelical Involvement in Society, But How?

In the years after 1917, evangelicals in Russia developed many socioeconomic activities, such as forming agricultural collectives or urban collective enterprises (artel). Even communist political leaders admired their economic projects among the poor and the have-nots, and the group's moral influence on the youth in the country. The president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Kalinin, was one among many of such leaders.[40]

The admiration, however, turned into bloody persecution under Stalin's rule in 1929. Soon all social and economic activities under the banner of religion were banned; the evangelical collective production plants were closed and put under Soviet anti-religious leadership.[41] And the Golden Age of evangelicals in Russia ceased to exist. An amazing socio-transformative movement had been crushed.

Was it right to give up on political involvement on a party level, as the evangelicals in Russia did? Would their enormous sociopolitical role in the first years after the revolution combined with a power position in parliament have determined a more positive outcome for Russia? This is at least worth thinking about. By sticking to a rigid nonconformist position of ecclesial non-involvement in a critical political transformation of a whole country, the church of Christ in Russia instead saw the "gates of hell prevail." Didn't Christ promise us something else? Surely, but on the condition that his church actively live as his *ecclesia*, as a true agent of discipling a nation to live a life of God's kingdom-people.

Some people may argue that this sounds too optimistic. They can rightfully point out that the Stalinist regime crushed all party activity outside of the one and only Communist party, introducing a violent antireligious system and leav-

39 Vassili G. Pavlov, Pravda o Baptistach, in *Baptist* 46/1911, 363.

40 Sundgren, *Gottes Volk*, 88–90. See more on the subject in *Olga Iu. Red'kina: Sel'skokhoziaistvenye religioznye trudovye kollektivyi v 1917-m - 1930-e gody: na materialakh evropeiskoi chasti RSFSR* (Volgograd: Gos. Universitet Volgorod, 2004); Tatiana Paavlovna Nazarova, *Blaagotvoritel'naia deiatel'nost' zarubezhbykh mennonitskikh organizatsii v sovetskom gosudarstve (1920–1930gg)* (Volgograd: Gos. Universitet Volgograd, 2010).

41 Sundgren, *Gottes Volk*, 91–92.

ing us with many difficult questions: how should the evangelicals have arranged themselves with such an aggressively acting regime, for example?

And yet, the evangelicals, too, positioned themselves against the state. Common sense dictates that joint action requires the ability to establish middle grounds, but the evangelicals left little space for any compromise in their statements, except in the party programs examined in this article. To work with the people for the common good, instead of alienating them by programmatic unwillingness to cooperate, may create space for evangelical involvement even where such is not wanted by the ruling party. In Putin's Russia today, for example, such involvement would be welcomed by the people.

To date, however, only a very few Christians have joined political parties; an evangelical party that would work for the common good is not in the line of vision for most Christians. It is time for Christians around the world to reconsider.

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective in Missional Perspective

by J. Denny Weaver

A Student's Question

Some years ago I chatted with a student at Bluffton University about the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.[1] This student and several of her friends were asking why the article on peace in the *Confession* appeared so far down in the outline—number 22 of 24 articles. To these students, this location of the article indicated its relative unimportance. If being a peace church is important and is what Mennonites are about, the student said, "We should move the article up so we can express who we are. We have had to live with the peace stance in our schools and have had to defend it more often than have some adults. This is why we *want* the article on peace near the top." Follow-up conversations with church authorities produced no answers that satisfied these students.

The committee that had drafted the *Confession* certainly had not intended to convey a relative unimportance of the article on "Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance" through their placement of it within the whole. In fact, its placement follows a longstanding, time-honored way for Mennonites to structure their confessions of faith. However, I believe there is more to say to the student than simply reassuring her that she misunderstood the meaning of the location of the article, that "this is the way we have always done it."

The conversation with this student stimulates reflections on the mission implications of the *Confession*. Obviously, she considered the *Confession* to be a window to the character of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), not just in gen-

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1 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, adopted by the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church at Wichita, KS, July 1995 (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1995).

eral but also in its unique contributions to the wider Christian community and world. As Mennonite individuals and programs do mission—that is, portray an attractive gospel and invite people to faith and to the church—the *Confession* is one place to discover what one is being invited to and why it is worth joining. Indeed, on MC USA's website, under the link "What We Believe," there is a link to the *Confession*, implying that the document has application to mission; to seekers it is one picture of who Mennonites are. The *Confession* also speaks to current members, as indicated by the student's question about the peace article being placed so far down on the list of issues of concern to MC USA.

Contemplating the implication from the student's query reveals that a confession faces two audiences:

1. Internal audience: Does the *Confession* present a picture of the church we want to be, a church that lives up to the title of Peace Church? Does it speak to members such as the student? To those who are disillusioned with the church's continued fragmentation?
2. External audience: Does the *Confession* communicate a distinct identity for Mennonites among other Christian denominations? After all, if Mennonites do not have a distinct identity, why bother to continue existing as a denomination? What does the *Confession* communicate to curious "nones," who consider themselves religious or spiritual but find traditional denominations irrelevant? And what does the *Confession* communicate in a time of continual war and increased visibility of racism in our society?

In summary, the missional effect of the *Confession* would include not only the personal impressions it makes on individuals such as my students but also the cultural impact it has for groups outside the Mennonite churches. The following analysis of the *Confession* proceeds with these missional dimensions in mind.

Quick Answer

For me, it was easy to understand why the article on peace was so far down in the outline. That placement followed from the decision described in the introduction about the sets of articles into which the *Confession* is divided. The eight articles in the first set "deal with themes common to the faith of the wider Christian church."[2] The second set describes Mennonite "practices," and the third concerns "discipleship." The fourth and final set, consisting of one article, treats the fulfillment of all things in the "Reign of God." Since the wider Christian church is not pacifist and does not generally forbid the exercise of

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2 *Confession of Faith*, 8–9.

government-sanctioned violence by Christians, by definition the decision to start with agreements common to the wider church relegated peace and non-violence to a position in the third set on "discipleship." In a case like this when the smaller partner in a conversation considers it most important to emphasize areas of agreement with the larger or dominant party, the distinct elements that give the smaller group its identity are inevitably relegated to the periphery of the discussion.

However, there's more to the picture than this. For one thing, the placement of articles in the *Confession* generally follows a long and time-honored way of structuring Mennonite confessions. But more germane for contemporary purposes is the reality that significant developments in theologizing by Mennonites in North America have occurred in the decades since the conception and writing of the *Confession*. In fact, these developments are new in the longer history of doing theology by Mennonites. We now inhabit a different theological world. Awareness of these developments puts the *Confession* in a different light and indicates the way that a future confession could best serve the missional interests of Mennonite Church USA as a peace church.

The following sections deal both with the historical tradition of Mennonite theologizing and with new developments.

The Historical Context in which the Confession Emerged

Only very recently has the question of where to start a confession become debatable. The impact of starting with general Christian statements is much clearer today than when the *Confession* was adopted in 1995. For one thing, the outline of the *Confession* followed a pattern that had characterized Mennonite theological writing since at least the seventeenth century. Already in 1527, Swiss Anabaptists adopted the Schleitheim Articles, edited by Michael Sattler, which focused on issues that characterized Anabaptists.[3] On the Mennonite Church side of the negotiations that produced the *Confession*, the confessional tradition began with the Dordrecht Confession, produced in 1632 in an effort to bring unity among Dutch Mennonites. This Mennonite Church tradition also produced a statement of "Christian Fundamentals" in 1921 and the *Mennonite Confession of Faith*[4] of 1963. On the side of the General Conference Mennonite Church, an important early confession was the Ris confession of "Mennonite Articles of Faith" in 1766, also by Dutch Mennonites. Although the General Conference avoided adopting an official confession, they did issue "Articles of

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3 John H[oward] Yoder, trans. and ed., *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, Classics of the Radical Reformation, vol. 1 (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1973).

4 *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, Adopted by Mennonite General Conference, August 22, 1963 (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1963).

Faith" in 1933 and a "Statement of Faith" in 1941 that was adopted by their seminary. The introduction to the *Confession* places itself in these confessional traditions.

These summaries of faith, although differing in their details, all begin with a statement about God followed by some combination of statements about Jesus, sin and redemption, and the Spirit before moving to discussions of the church, ordinances, and ethical issues such as rejection of violence. They conclude with final judgment and last things. In Dordrecht, "Defense by Force" is number 14 of 18 articles; in the very lengthy Ris confession, "Of Revenge and War" is number 29 of 36 articles. The *Mennonite Confession of Faith* lists "Love and Nonresistance" as article 18 of 20.[5]

This same general organization characterized Mennonite theological writing for much of the twentieth century. Mennonite writers started their theological statements with lists of things held in common with the wider Christian church and followed with lists of distinct beliefs of Mennonites. In fact, this was the assumed, proper way for Mennonite theology to proceed. On the fundamentalist and conservative and evangelical side of the Mennonite theological spectrum, writers made clear lists of beliefs accepted by all Christians and then items emphasized by Mennonites. Nonresistance or rejection of the sword, of course, appeared in the second category. This approach appears, for example, in a historical sequence of writings of fundamentalists John Horsch and Daniel Kauffman, traditional Mennonites Harold S. Bender and John C. Wenger, and evangelical Ronald Sider. On the progressive or liberal side of the Mennonite spectrum, the divide is less prominent between general statements and Mennonite beliefs, but the pattern is visible in a sequence that includes Cornelius H. Wedel, J. E. Hartzler, and Edmund G. Kaufman.[6]

In this light, the *Confession's* approach is not remarkable. In fact, it followed what was assumed to be a tried-and-true approach of accepting a foundation from the wider Christian tradition as an unquestioned given, and then adding particular or distinct Mennonite issues to that assumed foundational beginning point.

Not surprisingly, these efforts at theological summary—whether in the form of confessions or in other writing—assumed that a general theological

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5 For the text of all these statements, along with discussion of their original contexts, see Howard John Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith in North America: An Introduction*, Text-Reader Series, no. 2 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985).

6 For a description of how these writers developed their lists, see J. Denny Weaver, *Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity: A Proposal for the Third Millennium*, foreword by Glen Stassen, The C. Henry Smith Series, vol. 2 (Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., copublished with Herald, 2000), 50–65.

foundation or beginning point existed outside of Mennonites. After all, while Mennonites as a distinct tradition had existed for a bit more than four centuries, the Christian tradition stretched back nearly two millennia. This beginning point beyond Mennonites comprised what the *Confession* called the "historic creeds of the early Christian church." They were "assumed as foundational for Mennonite confessions from the beginning, [and] are basic to this confession as well."[7]

The content of these early-church confessional statements concerned primarily Christology and the relation of Jesus to God. Thus, the Apostles' Creed notes conception by the Holy Spirit and Virgin Birth and then jumps to suffering and crucifixion, burial and descent into hell, and resurrection and sitting at right hand of God. The Council of Nicaea (325 CE) declared Jesus to be "one in being" or "one in essence" with the Father, which is accepted as a statement of the deity of Jesus. The Council of Constantinople (381 CE) repeated and reaffirmed this language. Asserting the deity of Jesus then brought to the fore the question of Jesus's earthly form and how he related to humanity. In 451 CE, the Council of Chalcedon addressed that question with the assertion that Jesus was one undivided person who was "fully human and fully divine." The final addition to this idea complex came from the three Cappadocian Fathers, who suggested the term "person" for each of Father, Son, and Spirit, and thus the formula "one God in three Persons" to identify a triune God with distinguishable Persons.

All these Mennonite confessions and writings assumed an orientation within these historic statements. At the same time, they expressed awareness that this creedal language from the fourth and fifth centuries differed from biblical language. They thus exercised varying degrees of departure from creedal terminology and a preference for biblical expression, with American Fundamentalists the most willing to use creedal terminology.[8] What was common in all these instances? Each confession or summary assumed that Mennonite theology should begin with—perhaps make foundational—doctrines that came from some entity beyond Mennonites in the wider Christian tradition. More on these efforts later. The *Confession* clearly follows this tradition of Mennonite faith summaries.

For many Christians, these formulas and statements of "one in being with God," "fully human and fully divine," and "one God in three Persons" have been removed from their historical context and raised to the level of unquestioned givens or transcendent truth. For theologians, these formulas have functioned in one form or another as the assumed correct place from which all the-

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7 *Confession of Faith*, 7.

8 These variations are apparent in the texts of the confessions, which are collected in Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God*.

ology takes its cues. In this way, they constitute a standard theology, or, perhaps better stated, a standard starting point or framework for theological reflection.[9] To the extent this standard framework is accepted as an unquestioned given, deviations and departures from it would be problematic. Innovations in theology would be judged on the extent to which they agreed with this standard framework.

The *Confession* reflects the state of Mennonite theologizing as described thus far. Although it was formally adopted in 1995, it was already being talked about in 1984.[10] Prior to those decades, the approach of starting with shared or borrowed convictions from the standard framework was assumed. As previously noted, the *Confession* also followed that standard approach for an outline of Mennonite theologizing. The Mennonite dimension followed. Like previous statements, it used biblical language as well as some distinctly Mennonite emphases in the early articles—for instance, the fact that Jesus "loved his enemies and did not resist them with violence" is called "an example to follow." Language of Trinity, essence, substance, person, human nature, and divine nature appears in the commentaries.[11] The intent to provide a Mennonite cast to the standard program is also apparent in the subtitle "in a Mennonite Perspective."

In 1984, a debate about whether Mennonites might have an alternative to the standard framework for summarizing their faith was barely an embryo of what would later develop. For example, in 1983 (then) Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries (AMBS) organized what was, to my knowledge, the first Mennonite theology conference with "systematic theology" as a theme.[12] The

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9 Some traditions will prefer to call this standard program "orthodoxy." But consider the difference between calling it a "standard" beginning point versus an "orthodox" beginning point. When it is "standard," one recognizes its origin in a historical context, and in other contexts one might envision alternative kinds of statements. When it is "orthodox," the formulas have been elevated above historical contingency, and one has entered the realm of unquestioned givens and transcendent truth verses error. One does not envision truthful alternatives to orthodoxy.

An additional element of the standard program is some version of satisfaction atonement, which received its seminal form from Anselm of Canterbury's *Cur Deus Homo* (1098).

10 Marlin E. Miller, "Mennonites: A Confessional Christian People?," in *Mennonite World Handbook: Mennonites in Global Witness*, eds. Diether Götz Lichdi and Loretta Kreider (Carol Stream, IL: Mennonite World Conference, 1990), 172.

11 *Confession of Faith*, 10–15, quote 13.

12 The published version of papers from the consultation is Willard Swartley, ed., *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, Occasional Papers, no. 7 (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984). Authors of papers include Marlin Jeschke, J. Denny Weaver, Thomas Finger, A. James Reimer, and Howard John Loewen.

participants were hardly representative of the diversity of Mennonite faith and theological reflection: all presenters were men; there were fewer than twenty in attendance; and, as I recall, all attendees also were men. Thus, when discussion began about a confession that both Mennonite Church and General Conference Church could agree on, the diversity of Mennonite ideas and the later emergence of distinct approaches or schools of thought for Mennonite theologizing were not yet visible.

The *Confession* was conceived in a time of theological tension. In 1984 pastors from both Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church, who were concerned about what they considered liberal biblical scholarship in Mennonite colleges and at AMBS, organized a series of meetings at Smoketown, Pennsylvania. In response, the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church set up wide-ranging sessions at Laurelville Mennonite Church Camp in Pennsylvania and at Camp Lake, Wisconsin, to process these concerns. In those conversations, a real but unofficial dimension was a sociological need to reassure people who held conservative views that they were being heard. Although the pressure was unofficial, this concern to assuage conservatives had an impact on the composition of the drafting committee and the writing of the *Confession*, which was to serve as a summary of shared faith within the two to-be-merged Mennonite denominations, one more conservative than the other.

A polity difference also impacted the context from which the *Confession* emerged: while the General Conference identified a center toward which people moved but without strict boundaries, the Mennonite Church tended to define clear borders. The General Conference constituency was thus worried that a confession might be used to define borders and exclude. To meet this concern, as a part of securing widespread acceptance of the final product, promises and assurances were given that the confession would not be used to exclude. However, when the confession was finished and it became a description of the new church, it also indicated what was outside the new church. Thus, inevitably, in spite of the promises about not using the *Confession* to exclude, some congregations and conferences did appeal to the *Confession* as the basis of excluding people who were LGBTQ.[13]

These authors preview discussions in coming decades about the proper approach to a theology for Mennonites.

13 Gerald J. Mast, "Pink Menno's Pauline Rhetoric of Reconciliation," *Pink Menno*, August 2, 2013, http://www.pinkmenno.org/2013/08/pink-mennos-pauline-rhetoric-of-reconciliation/.

Theological Developments Since 1983

Schools of Thought

In 1983 and 1984 when the *Confession* was first initiated, discussions and debates were in their infancy about the proper approach to theology for Mennonites. Beyond questions about agreement with the standard framework, the idea of different, or even competing, approaches and methodologies was just emerging as a new debate in Mennonite theologizing. This is no longer the case. In the nearly four decades since that first conference on systematic theology, a plethora of publications have appeared debating the proper character or methodology for an identifiably Mennonite theology or summary of faith written specifically for Mennonites.

Within that array of publications, clear orientations or approaches are visible, coalescing into what could perhaps be called schools of thought or general approaches to Mennonite theologizing. Here is my brief, stylized characterization of these schools of thought, with focus on the primary contributors and publications. Note that even the attempt to identify and describe these schools of thought is already to take up a position in the debate about a theology for Mennonites. My own location in these descriptions appears here as well as in the final section of the essay, where I make a suggestion for a future confession of faith.

1. The Standard Framework

One cluster of approaches to a theology for Mennonites works from within what I have identified as the standard framework. Several versions are identifiable. One version builds explicitly on the foundation of the christological formulas of Nicaea and Chalcedon and the Trinitarian formula of the three Chalcedonian Fathers. Practitioners of this methodology argue that these terms, while not biblical, express biblical concepts and are thus appropriate for contemporary Mennonite use. A. James Reimer, a participant in that first conference on systematic theology in 1983, emerged as the prominent advocate of Nicene Christology and Trinitarian doctrine as the bedrock of Mennonite theologizing.[14] Many of his articles engaged in conversation with Mennonites of other perspectives, including some of my writing, and were later gathered into his seminal book, *Mennonites and Classical Theology.*

Although Darrin W. Snyder Belousek's work focused on classic atonement imagery more than Christology, he is another more recent strong proponent of

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14 For example, see Reimer's essay "Trinitarian Orthodoxy, Constantinianism, and Radical Protestant Theology," in A. James. Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, copublished with Herald, 2001), 247–71, as well as essays throughout this volume.

building theology for Mennonites on a classical foundation of Nicene-Chalcedonian Christology and Trinitarian doctrine.[15]

In terms of linking Mennonite theology to an assumed standard theology outside of or beyond the Mennonite tradition, the view of Ronald Sider runs parallel to that of Reimer and Belousek. However, rather than building on Nicaea and Chalcedon, Sider links Anabaptist and Mennonite theology to an evangelical version of the standard framework. In his view, if Mennonites were consistently biblical they would be evangelicals in theology, and if evangelicals were consistently biblical they would be Anabaptists in ethics.[16] As stated in its introduction, the *Confession* in general follows this outlook of beginning with the standard framework and then supplementing it with Mennonite emphases.

Thomas Finger also participated in the 1983 gathering at AMBS. His methodology offers a variation on working within the standard framework. Finger generally accepts the terminology of the standard approach but then redefines that terminology using concepts taken from various Anabaptist writers. He understands this approach as satisfying Mennonite emphases while simultaneously embracing the standard outlook.[17] The *Confession* also displays elements of this methodology, such as when it inserts a comment in the article on Jesus Christ that his nonresistance is an example to follow.

2. From the Ground Up

In contrast to starting with some version of an assumed standard theology, another cluster of approaches to theology for Mennonites begins from the ground up, so to speak. Currently, two versions fit within this description. The most radical version assumes a contemporary, scientific and historical worldview and uses contemporary tools and criteria that make sense in the modern world. Within this modern frame of reference, the author then constructs an understanding of God and of Jesus Christ at home in the modern world, while preserving distinct Mennonite principles such as nonviolence, the communal nature of the church, and a commitment to social justice. Practitioners of this methodology are free to observe ways in which the received, standard theolog-

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15 Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012).

16 See Sider's argument in Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelicalism and the Mennonite Tradition," in *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism*, ed. C. Norman Kraus (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1979), 159–68.

17 For his specific Anabaptist theology, see Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). My extended critique is J. Denny Weaver, "Parsing Anabaptist Theology: A Review Essay of Thomas N. Finger's *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*," *Direction* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 241–63.

ical tradition is outdated and needs to be revised or abandoned in accord with more modern, contemporary sensibilities. This characterization fits the writings of Gordon Kaufman, who described God as "serendipitous creativity."[18] For Kaufman, theology is always in process as the world around it changes.

The second so-called ground-up approach begins with and is shaped by focus and reflection on the specific narrative of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. A particular feature of this approach is the interpretative centrality of Jesus's rejection of the sword as an integral, defining element of theological summarizing. All versions of this approach clearly use the biblical narrative, but some versions of this theology would adhere closely to the biblical text as a whole, while others would employ biblical criticism to critique biblical violence and to abandon aspects of the received tradition, such as standard atonement theories. Theologians in this category would see the New Testament narrative of Jesus as setting a direction or orientation, with the modern writer then extending the narrative of Jesus and its meaning using contemporary images. Since the Gospel narratives differ among themselves on details of Jesus's life, and since contexts change, writers in this category also consider theology to be contextual and always to some extent in process of development. The most visible current writer in this category is J. Denny Weaver, a third writer from the gathering in 1983.[19] The works of Ted Grimsrud also belong here.[20] While the theology of C. Norman Kraus reflected a neo-orthodox outlook, his intent to use the narrative of Jesus also places him in this category.[21]

Since all Christian traditions confess Jesus, when these ground-up theologians identify the narrative of Jesus as the proper beginning point for theolo-

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18 Gordon D. Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1993); Gordon D. Kaufman, *Jesus and Creativity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

19 J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed., greatly rev. and expanded (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011); J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013); J. Denny Weaver, *God without Violence: Following a Nonviolent God in a Violent World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016). A revised version of *God without Violence* with a new subtitle of "A Theology of the God Revealed in Jesus" is forthcoming in 2020. This revision makes explicit the methodology of developing theology as an extension of the narrative of Jesus.

20 Ted Grimsrud, *God's Healing Strategy: An Introduction to the Bible's Main Themes* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., 2000); Ted Grimsrud, *Embodying the Way of Jesus: Anabaptist Convictions for the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007); Ted Grimsrud, *Theology As If Jesus Matters: An Introduction to Christianity's Main Convictions* (Telford, PA: Cascadia; copublished by Herald, 2009).

21 C. Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective*, rev. ed. (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1990); C. Norman Kraus, *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1991).

gizing, they can be said to propose theology for all Christians. But the reference point of a Jesus who rejected the sword is a Mennonite interpretative perspective, and these theologians hope that Mennonites will recognize it as speaking for them as well—thus, theology for Mennonites.

Given the development of identifiable schools of thought in Mennonite theologizing since the *Confession* was first conceived, we should not treat Mennonite theology as one undifferentiated entity. We should also, therefore, not presume that the *Confession* reflects *the one* Mennonite perspective on theology. Of the approaches sketched here, the first cluster depends primarily on agreement with some version of Christendom's standard theology, while the latter group reflects Mennonite issues—most particularly, a commitment to nonviolence—in a more integral way. In any case, seeing these options today makes clear that the *Confession* does not reflect a universal consensus of theology or even of Mennonite theology. It reflects several specific choices of methodology and interpretation—namely, to orient theology for Mennonites around an outline taken from the wider Christian tradition, with an intent to display that agreement. None of these choices or options were clearly articulated when the *Confession* was conceived.

As noted above, when considered from a universal perspective, a central problem with methodologies in the first category, and any variants and revision thereof, is that they appear to relegate peace and nonviolence to a secondary position. This location is a problem if MC USA takes seriously its identity as a peace church. But not all Mennonites would agree that this is problematic. Letters-to-the-editor in church publications have apologized for making an idol of the peace stance, or expressed fears that focus on peace will hinder church planting or evangelism. Such comments imply that rejection of violence is not—or ought not to be—intrinsic to the story of Jesus Christ.[22] The *Confession* comes close to this seeming marginalization, not merely because it numbers the article on peace as the 22nd of 24 articles but also because its methodology of focusing its first section on agreements with the wider Christian church renders the rejection of violence barely visible in its discussion of Jesus Christ.

The importance of a clear and distinct peace witness was recently brought home to me in the worship service at Madison Mennonite church. One Sunday we had a guest preacher, the long-time pastor of the United Church of Christ (UCC) congregation from which our Mennonite congregation rents space. This minister singled out our identity as a peace church; do not take it for granted, he said. Cherish and nourish this peace stance. It is a unique gift to the Christian church, not found elsewhere, and we all need it.

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22 Other Mennonite writers have argued that posing alternatives to the classic creedal formulas, as the "ground up" authors suggest, will harm ecumenical relations between Mennonites and other denominations.

The *Confession* clearly has missional implications for MC USA as a peace church. But there is more to say. In fact, I suggest that a development in the contemporary context has greater importance than these observations about the seeming marginalization of nonviolence when the focus is agreement with the standard framework. The next section below points beyond methodology to issues within the language itself of the material taken from the wider Christian tradition.

Postmodernity and (Other) Contextual Theologies

Another development since the early formation of the *Confession* is the emergence of what philosophers called "postmodernity."[23] While it was previously assumed possible to identify a universally recognized foundation as the beginning of all truth, within the condition called postmodernity it is now recognized that every claimed universal foundation still represents a particular standpoint. That is to say, every theology and theological formula emerges from and reflects a particular context, agenda, and worldview. For example, it is clearer now than it was some decades ago that the standard creeds of the "wider Christian church"—what the introduction in the *Confession* calls the "historic creeds of the early Christian church"—emerged from and reflect a particular historical context. They are, in fact, human constructs using available concepts expressed in local languages and indicating contextual decisions particular to that historical time and cultural place. Their time and place differ from that of the New Testament. As previously noted, the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon used the terms "essence" or "substance" or "nature" to characterize Jesus. Various forms of the language of "threeness" emerged, and the three Cappadocian Fathers used "Person" to say what there were three of in God. Between the New Testament and the use of these terms in the fourth and fifth centuries, there was an obvious shift of category from narrative to these ontological or being categories to identify Jesus Christ and his relationship to God.

To be sure, except for using "triune" to describe God, the text of the *Confession* does not use this creedal language. A note in the commentary simply states: "This confession assumes basic agreement with traditional confessions of faith, though it remains with biblical terminology for the most part."[24] That said, although the *Confession* does not make use of the creedal language, contemporary peace church Christians should acknowledge what is at stake—or at least implied—by explicitly aligning (as in the commentary) with the historic creeds.

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23 For brief descriptions of the condition called "postmodernity," see Weaver, *Anabaptist Theology*, 17–30; or essays throughout Susan Biesecker-Mast and Gerald Biesecker-Mast, eds., *Anabaptists and Postmodernity*, foreword by J. Denny Weaver, The C. Henry Smith Series, vol. 1 (Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., copublished with Herald, 2000).

24 *Confession of Faith*, 12–13, quote 13.

In particular, this acknowledgment should begin with the characteristics of the church and the social circumstances in which the post-New Testament language emerged. These circumstances included Emperor Constantine's edict that made Christianity a legal religion and—perhaps more importantly—the church accepting imperial intervention in church affairs. Church officials on both sides of theological disputes appealed to the emperor for support and opposed such support when it favored the other side.[25] In these ways, the church had made peace with the emperor's sword, in contrast to the nonviolent way of Jesus narrated in the New Testament.

This at least implicit acquiescence to violence takes on even greater importance when theological formulations then add that Jesus is "one substance with the Father" (Nicaea) and that Jesus is "truly God and truly human" (Chalcedon). When these formulations—whatever their independent merit—were put forward as the foundation of belief in Jesus but separated from the nonviolent life and teaching of Jesus, it became possible for Christians to profess Jesus Christ while carrying the sword (doing violence) for the emperor (an alternative allegiance). Such would not have been the case if Jesus were still identified by focusing on his story. That narrative explicitly includes his rejection of the sword, showing that nonviolent service, in loyalty to God alone, is intrinsic to who he was.[26]

From a missional perspective—that is, a perspective that looks outside the Mennonite fold—it is important to add that those concerned about the violence of the sword are not the only Christians to point to problems with the generic categories of the classic formulas. Parallel to the observation that these formulas accommodated the sword, James H. Cone, the primary founder of the Black Theology movement, wrote that these categories accommodated racism and slavery and the corresponding violence required. He also pointed to absence of the narrative of Jesus as the cause.

Most recently, writings of Willie James Jennings and particularly J. Kameron Carter have continued the line of James Cone in raising questions about the classic creedal formulas. They identify the early church fathers' separation of

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25 For one extended example, see Philip Jenkins, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* (New York: HarperOne, 2010).

26 The observation that the creedal categories can accommodate the sword (and later, racism) is not limited to peace church writers. In a book in which Joerg Rieger hoped to rehabilitate the standard theology for ethics, he wrote that the life of Jesus needs to be included in the Jesus that Nicaea called one in being with the Father. "It is hardly an accident that the life of Christ is not mentioned in the creeds. . . . The challenge to empire posed by the life of Christ would have just been too great." Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 96.

Jesus from his Jewishness and the covenant with Abraham as the beginning of the accommodation of racism and the development of the idea of white supremacy within Western Christendom. Again, that separation is clear in the classic formulas that identify Jesus only in terms of "deity" in general and "humanity" in general, not the God of Abraham and Sarah, and the Jewish community of faith within humanity.

With Jesus separated from his Jewishness and the covenant with Israel, European theologians could then develop a supposed universal Jesus, who was apparently elevated above race but actually represented humanity of European ancestry both symbolically and conceptually. In short, they could picture Jesus in their own image, with European whiteness becoming the essence and the norm of what it meant to be human,[27] and people of color along with their communities and governments were treated as varying degrees of lesser or inferior. In the same way, with God's covenant separated from the people and history of Israel, Europeans could appropriate the ideas of being God's people and chosenness for their own agenda.

This race-based, theological outlook was well established by 1493, when a papal bull proclaimed the Doctrine of Discovery. In this doctrine, any land not governed by Christian rulers could be "discovered." That is, it could be claimed, with local governments overthrown and European rule established, resources exploited, and indigenous people dominated, expelled, or killed. Appeal to this race-based doctrine was used to justify the slave trade and the entire edifice of European colonial domination and exploitation of peoples of color around the world. This exploitation included all European claims to the Americas, as well as the foundation of manifest destiny and westward expansion in the United States. For those who know this history, what kind of missional message does the *Confession* communicate when it leads with this theology from the wider church that did not deal with either the sword or race and ethnicity?

And one more, very contemporary, point: with the election in 2016 of a president who has given permission for the racism and belief in white supremacy that lies under the surface of United States society to assert itself more publicly, it suddenly becomes obvious that the *Confession* says nothing about race or racism. In our current context, statements on racism or lack thereof in the church's defining document surely have implications for mission.

The previous section observed that starting with agreement with the wider Christian church tends to push distinct Mennonite issues to the periphery. This

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27 For these developments in black theology, see James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997); J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010).

section adds that the implications of the condition of postmodernity point to issues within the classic language itself taken from the historic or classic creeds. This leaves us with a key question: What is authoritative for MC USA—the decisions about terminology made by men in the fourth and fifth centuries, restatements of this terminology in biblical terms, modern restatements taken from a creed written in the "wider Christian church," or the Jesus Christ identified in the biblical narrative and the implications and learnings we can derive from that narrative?

Sixteenth-Century Anabaptist Theology

A third development since the early 1980s concerns potential changes in the way that sixteenth-century Anabaptist theology is understood. The *Confession*'s introduction called the historic creeds "foundational for Mennonite confessions from the beginning."[28] Early Anabaptists did, in fact, refer to the historic creeds and formulas. Thus, until rather recently, it was assumed that Anabaptists did little, if any, original theologizing but rather carried over the classic creedal statements from the church they had rejected. In earlier generations, John Horsch,[29] Harold S. Bender,[30] Cornelius Krahn,[31] and John C. Wenger[32] all asserted, with varying levels of intensity, that sixteenth-century Anabaptists accepted the historic creeds of Christendom. More recently, historians Walter Klaassen and C. Arnold Snyder assert that Anabaptists' use of the historic creeds demonstrates their clear orientation in historically orthodox and Trinitarian doctrine. The major exception is the celestial flesh Christology of Menno Simons and other Dutch Anabaptists.[33]

Awareness of postmodernity's outlook brings a new question to the interpretation of sixteenth-century Anabaptist theologizing. With postmodernity's

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28 *Confession of Faith*, 7.

29 John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1942), 379–80.

30 Harold S. Bender, "'Walking in the Resurrection': The Anabaptist Doctrine of Regeneration and Discipleship," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35, no. 2 (April 1961): 102.

31 Cornelius Krahn, "Prolegomena to an Anabaptist Theology," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24, no. 1 (January 1950): 6.

32 John C[hristian] Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*, 4th printing, rev. (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1959), 145–46.

33 Walter Klaassen, "Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism: A Vision Valid for the Twentieth Century?," *Conrad Grebel Review* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 245–46; C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 1995), 84; C. Arnold Snyder, "Beyond Polygenesis: Recovering the Unity and Diversity of Anabaptist Theology," in *Essays in Anabaptist Theology*, ed. H. Wayne Pipkin, Text Reader Series (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994), 11.

emphasis on particular perspectives in mind, one can ask whether the location of Anabaptists in an ecclesiological trajectory outside of the official church of the masses might be reflected in their theologizing. Even though they rejected the inherited ecclesiology of the mass church, did these Anabaptists simply accept that church's theology? Or might their new ecclesiological stance have stimulated new thinking in theology as well? When examined with these questions in mind, their theological statements clearly were not merely repetitions of the inherited theology. Thus, we find that the early Anabaptists added missing elements to the received formulas, sometimes altering them greatly, which suggests a rather adaptive posture toward the received formulas. In other instances, there were efforts to develop new formulas that reflected their new church, which focused on the story of Jesus, an emphasis that made rejection of the sword an integral component of their church. Writings of Pilgram Marpeck, Menno Simons, and Peter Riedeman in the *Ausbund* and in the *Martyrs Mirror*, among others, can be cited in this regard.[34]

With regard to violence and peace, although the original Anabaptist movements were not uniform, and sword-bearers were certainly a part of the story, rejection of the sword was a central issue for most of Anabaptism in a way that was not true for other reforming movements. Indeed, the Anabaptism that endured became identified as a nonviolent movement and is a forerunner of today's peace church. These observations suggest that early Anabaptist ventures into theology that went beyond the historic creeds can serve as a precedent for the contemporary Mennonite Church USA.

An Earlier Confession

Another element of change over time appears when the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* is compared with the *Mennonite Confession of Faith* that was adopted in 1963 by the Mennonite Church, one of the two conferences that joined to form Mennonite Church USA.[35] Among a number of differences, a

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34 For discussions, see comments throughout Gerald Biesecker-Mast, *Separation and the Sword in Anabaptist Persuasion: Radical Confessional Rhetoric from Schleitheim to Dordrecht*, The C. Henry Smith Series, vol. 6 (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2006); Gerald J. Mast, "Jesus' Flesh and the Faithful Church in the Theological Rhetoric of Menno Simons," in *The Work of Jesus Christ in Anabaptist Perspective: Essays in Honor of J. Denny Weaver*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver and Gerald J. Mast (Telford, PA: Cascadia; Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2008), 173–90; and the chapters on the *Ausbund*, Pilgram Marpeck, and Menno Simons, and the appendix on the Trinity in *Martyrs Mirror* in J. Denny Weaver and Gerald J. Mast, *Nonviolent Word: Anabaptism, the Bible, and the Grain of the Universe* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020).

35 J. C. Wenger is thought to be the primary author of this confession. See "Mennonite Confession of Faith, 1963," Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online,

reader immediately notices the male language of the earlier document. It uses "man" to refer to all people and calls the church a "brotherhood." Along with stating that "to the Lord men and women are equal," the 1963 statement also describes an "order of creation" in which men and woman are fitted for "differing functions"—"man" has the primary leadership role, and "the woman is especially fitted for nurture and service." The prayer covering or "veiling" is prescribed for women as one of the ordinances of the church, and both this veiling and long, uncut hair are mentioned as "symbols" of women's nurturing and service role.

This male language, the identification of distinct gender roles, and the practice of the head veiling and uncut hair for women have all disappeared with the writing of the 1995 *Confession*. A significant parallel remains, however; following the standard framework, the 1963 statement locates the article on "Love and Nonresistance" near the end—number 18 of 20 articles.

Awareness of the disappearance of male language, the abandonment of the veiling practice that was once considered mandatory, and the developments in the period since the 1995 confession was first conceived makes clear that the way Mennonites (and any Christian tradition, for that matter) understand the Bible and construct theology does change over time. Any confession or theological summary is a snapshot of beliefs at a moment in time. This awareness and knowledge of change over time is one reason that statements from nearly four decades ago should not be treated as absolutes with the power to expel those who have questions about an individual issue—such as inclusion of people who are LGBTQ—particularly since at the time the *Confession* was adopted, many promises were made that it would not be used to exclude anyone.

A Suggestion

A previous section in this article indicated that the new ecclesiological stance in which early Anabaptists positioned themselves also opened the way to theological approaches that did not simply follow the inherited standard framework. Mennonites today are heirs to that ecclesiastical tradition. I suggest that Mennonites can and should develop theology that reflects that particular historical tradition and way of understanding Jesus. It differed from the mass church of Christendom in the sixteenth century, and as the UCC pastor said who spoke to Madison Mennonite, this is a distinct heritage today, and we should nurture and continue to develop it.

I hope that Mennonites would not tell the writers of black theology that they should stop doing theology that reflected first of all their experience of suf-

accessed April 13, 2020, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite_Confession_of_Faith,_1963.

fering from slavery and racism, and to focus instead on fitting into the inherited standard (white) theology. I also hope that Mennonites would not tell women to shift away from feminist theology and concerns about abuse and instead to focus more on the standard (patriarchal) framework. By the same token, I suggest that Mennonite theologians—particularly white males who do not experience the discrimination that African Americans do in one way and women in another—should recall their location in the historical Anabaptist, peace church tradition and its challenge to the mass church of Christendom. Embracing and standing in that tradition can give Mennonite theologians, particularly white males, a view of the problems with violence, racism, and patriarchy in the inherited theology parallel to the concerns of women and African Americans.

A way to understand the particular perspective a theology might have is to ask what it is specific to. My suggestion is that a theology for the peace church should be specific to the work and witness of the Jesus who rejected the sword. Generally speaking, Christian theology from a Mennonite perspective should be understood first of all as thoughts and words, images and ideas that are used to draw meaning from the story of Jesus as narrated in the New Testament. In other words, rather than an effort to find agreement with the standard views of the wider Christian church, the first question for Mennonite theologizing and a Mennonite confession of faith should be on who Jesus is, as he is identified through the telling of his story in the New Testament. More specifically, theology for Mennonites, as the reflection of the peace church, should make central and prominent the peace-making and nonviolent practice and teachings of Jesus. Following this narrative focus, the confession would then show how various beliefs, themes, ethical commitments, and other aspects of our faith reflect or are drawn from the story of Jesus.

To be sure, such a theology for Mennonites would discuss the character of God, the way that we should understand Jesus and his relationship to God, and much more—points that are also found in the standard program. There would be possible intersections and overlap with these points, but finding agreements with them should not be our first concern. Focusing on agreement with other Christian faith traditions has the effect of decentering our own peace witness and its focus on the peace practice of Jesus narrated in the New Testament.

If this procedure of starting with the story of Jesus were followed, an article on God would emphasize that what is (or can be) known about God throughout the scriptures would be discovered through the interpretive lens of the peace story of Jesus. For example, it would thus be clear, from this perspective, that the God made visible in the story of Jesus could not be a God who sanctioned violence and that the power of the reign of God does not come through violence. Likewise, it would be clear that serving the God of this story would mean living in the story of Jesus as the basis for ethics. Thus, in a society with a military-based economy and a status of perpetual war, there would be emphasis

on Jesus's rejection of violence, including stories such as healing on the Sabbath that display active nonviolence witness against injustice.

Similarly, in a social context in which the presidency of Donald Trump has given permission for the racist underbelly of American society to show itself, a Mennonite theological summary should point to Jesus's dealing with Samaritans and non-Jews to emphasize the church's stance of anti-racism and its welcome to people of color whether born in the United States or recent immigrants. In a time of heightened awareness of the objectification of and abuse of women, a summary of faith from a Mennonite perspective should emphasize the ways in which Jesus lifted up the status of women. In a world in which the reckless consumption of fossil fuels threatens life on the planet, a Mennonite faith summary centered on Jesus should emphasize the goodness of creation and the divine charge for human beings to care for it. In a society focused on consumerism and the search for happiness through accumulation of money and possessions, a Mennonite narrative of Jesus should point to his comments on wealth or the story of Zacchaeus as an example of restorative justice.

Building on this ethical centrality of the peace practice of Jesus displayed in the New Testament narrative, an article on the church would then emphasize that the church consists of the structures and the people that God and the Holy Spirit fashion together into the earthly witness to the continuing presence in the world of the nonviolent, peace-making Jesus Christ. An article on salvation would point to how God draws people together and shapes them into the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Further articles on the meaning of salvation would explain that it is about the good news that in the reign of God one does not fear a judgmental deity, one is freed from the need to fight and seek revenge, one is freed from following a rulebook to earn salvation. Such statements of the meaning of the story of Jesus Christ could be expanded greatly. Of course, these statements are merely the outline and orientation of a more comprehensive theology. The point here is to show that all of these statements emerge or are developed as extensions of the meaning of the story of Jesus, focused on his life and teaching of peace.

This suggestion to start a confession with the story of Jesus and then derive all subsequent issues from that story does not solve all problems with writing a confession. We would still have to debate, for example, which items to put near the beginning and which farther down in the outline. But this approach would at least give a different feel to the whole. No article would be a self-contained statement of a theme; each article would take its meaning from the first article—namely, the story of Jesus. Thus, even an item that was 22 of 24 articles, which might appear to have lesser import because of its location, would at least draw its meaning from the head, Jesus Christ. Or, in a radical departure from traditional format, one might visualize the confession as a wheel with Jesus Christ at the center and each article a spoke emanating from that center.

The approach of starting with and then drawing implications from the story of Jesus changes the purpose of the confession. It remains a statement that defines the church's identity, but rather than being a description of current agreements, it sets a direction and becomes a vision for the future or a goal toward which to strive. This approach obviously speaks to the question raised by my student.

Further, posing the confession as a vision for the future would make it less liable to serve as a document that excludes. That factor would appeal to Mennonite young people who are increasingly frustrated with the church's practice of exclusion and who have long come to accept, without qualification, people who are LGBTQ. It may also speak to young people who are tempted to see the church as unnecessary or irrelevant.

Along with speaking to issues within the church, starting with Jesus in a confession of faith would be an *ecumenical* standpoint. After all, every Christian tradition has Jesus in common. Posing the confession with a distinctly peace church orientation might even appeal to Christians in other traditions who are frustrated with the bland stances of their churches.

But our question here is the missional impact of rethinking a Mennonite confession of faith along the lines just proposed. Displaying the issues of social justice as intrinsic to the story of Jesus is a matter of the witness of MC USA in the world. A confession of faith organized according to this outline would constitute a significant missional witness to the meaning of faith in Jesus Christ in a world that is increasingly indifferent to Christian faith. In the face of that indifference from "nones," Christian faith as proposed here demonstrates its relevance in our world.

Human Creation Accounts in Genesis 1–3

by Dorothy Yoder Nyce

A quote of writer and scholar Virginia Woolf has hung near my desk for decades. It states: "To have by nature a point of view. To stick to it. To follow it where it leads is the rarest of possessions and lends value even to trifles." For decades, that posture has shaped my knowledge, writing,[1] and teaching about the two creation accounts of humanity found in Genesis 1–3.

This article highlights Hebrew scholar Phyllis Trible's lengthy chapter titled "A Love Story Gone Awry," about Genesis 1–3, in her book *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*.[2] Her concern centers primarily in consequences of translation error: the Hebrew term *ha'adam* means *the human* or *earth creature*, not *man* or *Adam*. Gene Tucker's review of Trible's book states its goal: "To redeem at least some elements of the biblical tradition for a liberated humanity, female and male, by reinterpreting—not rewriting—certain biblical texts."[3]

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1 For example, see Dorothy Yoder Nyce, "The Interpretive Intrigue—Genesis 1 to 3," *Gospel Herald* (October 4, 1983): 684–85.

2 Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 73.

3 Gene M. Tucker, "Trible's *Rhetoric*: A Review Article," *Andover/Newton Quarterly* (March 1979): 225–30.

Some writers of similar view, or who engage with Trible's detailed literary analysis, deserve citation: Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 75–85; Phyllis A. Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them": Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 2 (April 1981): 129-60; Richard M. Davidson, "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1–2," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 5–21; Pamela J. Milne, "The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture: The Implications of Structuralist Analyses for Feminist Hermeneutics," *Journal of Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 17–34. Phyllis A. Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source for a Contemporary Theology of Sexuality," and "Biblical Authority in the Light of Feminist Critique," in *Missing Persons and*

Trible addresses how traditional patterns of living out translation and interpretation of specific words may distort a text's core truth. Central to such traditional teaching is that *woman's* value is reduced by woman having been created later than and from *man*; that she deserves being faulted more than he for disobedience; and that punishments for the two validate man's control over woman, along with her acquiescence to such control. Both women and men have used this imbalance of human value to justify physical and/or emotional abuse of women through the centuries. Self-definition for each becomes skewed. Such outcomes need not and should not be.

Critics will ask, why return to a late-1970s resource for insight today? Because I believe that the core Truth of Trible's book holds firm even while some later writers continue to "bless" the earlier creation of *man*; that Trible's writing has value beyond liberal scholarship; and that resistance to change continues from some leaders already exposed to Trible's authentic metaphor of "journey." A couple years ago, for example, a Mennonite Bible professor in a public lecture on human creation referred to Trible's chapter noted above. After the lecture, when I asked if he had actually read Trible's chapter and he said yes, I asked why he had avoided advocating for her insight. "Because too much would have to change," he answered.

In other words, he chose not to change his view or to encourage others to change theirs, based on *his* judgment of the *re*-vision needed in order to be faithful to the Hebrew text. Do we then conclude that *he* was unready to shift from historic views? Did he wish to claim traditional judgments about woman being inferior to man and more directly responsible for choosing to eat of one tree in the Garden that God had pronounced off-limits to the first earth creature? Did conviction that both woman and man truly represent or image God (declared in the earlier Genesis chapter 1 but chronologically later creation account) require "too much change" for Christians like him? People who resist "rev'lution" do so for a reason, denied or admitted. I deeply care for and teach church people who need and benefit from Wise change; to conserve the comfort of teaching from the past risks extended absence of created goodness!

Indications that Mennonites rely on traditional interpretation of key scriptures continue to surface. In October 2018, a lectionary text for preaching centered on Genesis 2 content. After the worship leader read the text, the preacher admittedly struggled to express Wisdom in conveying traditional views and

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Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 155–73, 248–64; Joseph E. Coleson, "*Ezer Cenegdo*: A Power Like Him, Facing Him as Equal," Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, 1996, retrieved May 24, 2018; Mary Kate Morse, "Gender Wars: Biology Offers Insights to a Biblical Problem," Portland Seminary, George Fox University, 2006, http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes/47.

consequences of man being created first. Distraught that yet again my people, including vulnerable children, had been misled by tradition, I left the service prior to the serving of communion. Much as I valued that preacher's usual efforts, I felt driven to write to both leaders of that service, assuring them that "neither of them needed to declare that *man,* and certainly not a person named Adam, was created first and woman later from his rib." The preacher's genuine response was that simply "due to an exceedingly busy week, she hadn't had time to get her hands on Trible's chapter" when preparing the sermon.

Further, for some years, I have been a part-time adult Sunday School teacher. During the fall 2018 quarter of Adult Bible Study (ABS), the lessons focused on Genesis 1–3. After the quarter's study, I wrote to the Mennonite ABS editor of the international series expressing regret that so many churchwide adults had again missed opportunity to examine that content by *countering* negative judgments about women. The editor explained the planners' intent to "move people beyond the conservative theological rabble about creationism" and the risks of directly addressing contemporary, scholarly issues like "patriarchal, oppressive theologies." Real dilemmas! But now the harm of traditional, misinformed teaching about core Genesis texts regarding human creation will continue among most Mennonites for yet another three-year cycle.

How, most effectively, will change in understanding scripture come about? This is a recurring question, one that hints toward the mission of a journal like *Anabaptist Witness.* (Hopefully, the journal's readers deny traditional claims like "the West knows best" or "We have a message to tell, not to receive.") Before Mennonites share insight about human creation in broader world settings, we need to authentically live equity within marriage, value leadership of both women and men, and counter physical or emotional duress toward the "other" sex or toward one who exhibits diverse sexual being—to truly enable and share diverse human gifts with family members and neighbors. Therefore, the "mission" regarding authentic value and equity for all people remains most local.

Attention to the goodness of being created human invites us to learn from others, ancient or modern. We might study "the immortal myth of Adam and Eve" from a Jewish perspective or be informed about similar or differing views of humanity by a Muslim from Quranic Truth. For instance, studies about "Female Images of God in Christian Worship" described by a Korean would prompt us to understand *han* if we wished to discuss being created in God's image as described in Genesis 1:4. And having lived in India multiple times, I was invited by a returned missionary in early 2010 to respond to an Indian bishop's studied paper titled "Woman, You Are Great! (Genesis 1–3 content)."

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4 Myungsil Kim, *Female Images of God in Christian Worship: In the Spirituality of TonSungGiDo of the Korean Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

While his paper expressed genuine respect for women, I felt free to stretch his thought further by drawing from Trible's insight.

Both women and men experience harm from distortions of scriptural content. Trible notes a number of such distortions:

- That a male God created man before woman; *first* indicates being superior while *second* implies inferior.
- That woman's purpose as "helper" cures man's loneliness.
- That woman's destiny (from man's rib) is to be derived and dependent, not autonomous.
- That woman was first to sin; she in turn tempted man to follow.
- That woman's greater sin caused her punishment of severe childbirth pain, whereas man is destined only to struggle with the soil.
- That God's way for women to remain faithful is for man to rule over her and for her to desire being submissive to him.

Not one of these schemes restates or actually appears in scripture, Trible says.[5] Yet centuries of such patriarchal, misogynist, male-privileged views of scripture among Christians, including Mennonites, have hindered our practice of Divine vision for creation.[6] Many women, judging themselves as created last and more at fault for sin, minimize their worth; sex stereotypes persist; and Jesus's radical call to live out God's basic design for human equity is undermined.

Since many Christians have chosen to pursue untruth regarding scripture or have been vulnerable to such, our sacred task is to choose different interpretations. It is our duty to revolt against traditional views that harm both women and men—to practice authentic scripture translation, claim due vision, and bond through informed conviction. All that any of us knows about any scripture text is someone's interpretation. Each of us, with bias, depends on a translation of scripture, usually from an original language or with preference for a specific view. We choose what view to uphold. The duty is ours to decide either to persist with traditional consequences or, out of conviction, work toward change in perception.

To revolt always demands risk and requires serious reflection and conviction. It may express reformer Martin Luther's confession that "I can do no other." Revolution is unlikely to be easily accepted by others. It requires care, including caution, lest further oppression occur. To revolt involves serious *re*-exam, often altering traditional patterns. Each of us determines which efforts to engage, which programs to promote, which causes to pursue, which "points

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5 Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 73.

6 Note: Issues like evolution, creationism, or ancient accounts of creation are not addressed in this article. Nor are perspectives from multiple world religions that may describe women as inferior and therefore worthy of abuse.

of view to stick to and follow regardless of where they lead." Juliana Claassens suggests in *Claiming Her Dignity: Female Resistance in the Old Testament* that revolt spreads from the impact of ruptured new ideas.[7]

Wilda Gafney, womanist writer and preacher, practices revolt in the form of midrash, describing her close reading of texts like Genesis 1–3 as "God-wrestling." She wrestles with "God of the Holy Name," God and the text, and even talks back to the text itself.[8] We choose whether to value her use of "sanctified imagination." While Gafney's feminist, educated, Anglican stance takes into account Jewish heritage as well as her African American heritage with slavery, my feminist, white, Mennonite loyalty is enhanced by research and interfaith— notably, Asian—Wisdom. Revolt regarding Genesis creation accounts about humanity calls us to not blame women, to not cower because "too much needs to change."[9]

All cultures have creation *myths*, accounts of "how things began."[10] Myth, a biblical, literary genre rich in symbolism, explains stories or responds to questions about causes or customs. African Modupe Oduyoye, writing about Genesis 1–11, suggests that the right question to ask about a myth is not "Is it

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7 L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Claiming Her Dignity: Female Resistance in the Old Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2016), 156. Also, in Claassen's book (97), Martha Nussbaum names conditions needed for a person or group to truly show solidarity with another—being convinced that the other's predicament is undeserved and that both involved (self and other) are vulnerable.

8 Wilda C. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2017), 8–9.

9 Other perspectives exist. For example, a college student wrote a paper comparing "Eve and Lilith" for a course I taught titled "Bible and Sexuality." Lilith's legend most likely developed during the Jewish exile to Babylon, the stress of which could have been threatening their survival. Editor Susannah Heschel describes how men feared loss of morale and manhood; they feared that Jewish people might become extinct ("The Lilith Question, *Aviva Cantor*" in *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader* [New York: Schocken, 1983], 40–50). Further, men in exile might have feared women's power, their resistance to being primarily enablers of men; instead of being "helpmeets," women might have presumed patriarchal, male roles. Within such a milieu, a legend about Lilith, the first woman, might have emerged. Woman's struggle to be equal with or independent of Adam displeased him, the legend explains. So he complained to God, who dispatched three angels. And Lilith took decisive action to escape. In her commentary *The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), Ellen Frankel describes the rebel Lilith as, together with Adam, being the first creature. But when Adam resented their equal status, Lilith voiced her protest by leaving Paradise (viii).

10 Keep in mind that creation is an ongoing process.

accurate?" but rather "What does it mean?"[11] Most likely, those who told and wrote the Genesis creation stories borrowed segments from ancient stories near them—Babylonian or Sumerian. The Sumerians had lived in the region with their language several thousand years before the Israelites arrived with Hebrew. Chapters 1–11 of the Hebrew Bible convey Primeval (original) History, while chapters 12–50 relate "ancestral family stories." British writer Karen Armstrong explains how these "creation accounts of fiction that offer timeless truths demonstrate the basic religious principle that no one human account can ever comprise the whole of divine truth."[12] But since faulty interpretation of such content has strongly shaped our being human, we do well to at least be more accurate with it.[13]

Creation of *adam* (human or earth creature) in chapter 1 conveys writing from the sixth century BCE. Two other distinct details about human beings are noted in this chapter:

1. They represent *God's image.* Remarkably, God distinctly shares in equal depth with all human beings the Divine image. In explaining the meaning of image, Odoyuye notes that women and men, unlike other creatures, "respond to God."[14] Ellen Ross adds that we have the capacity to know and love and to also deepen our relationship with God.[15]
2. They have *dominion* with the rest of created existence. *Dominion*, never to be distorted as *domination*, means "responsible care" or respect.[16] Other created life is to experience Divine care through action conveyed to it by humanity. Today's concern for ecology follows from human failure to care responsibly.

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11 Modupe Oduyoye, *The Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of Men: An Afro-Asiatic Interpretation of Genesis* 1–11 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 34.

12 Karen Armstrong, *In the Beginning: A New Interpretation of Genesis* (New York: Ballantine, 1996), 18–20.

13 Three sources known as J, E, and P frame much of the Genesis and Pentateuch content. P, for the Priestly school of scholars of the sixth century BCE, explains God Almighty's creative purpose and goodness in chapter 1. With J (or Y) Yahwist writing, God is named *Yahweh* (tetragrammaton letters YHVH: *yud-he-vav-he*). Likely from the tenth century BCE, J content shapes creation and the disobedience content of chapters 2–3. E for Elohist, with God named *El/Elohim*, likely originated in the ninth century. (The fourth writer is known as D, the Deuteronomist writer.)

14 Oduyoye, *The Sons of the Gods*, 87.

15 Ellen Ross, "Human Persons as Images of the Divine: A Reconsideration," in *The Pleasure of Her Text: Feminist Readings of Biblical and Historical Texts*, ed. Alice Bach (Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1990), 102.

16 James Limburg. "What Does It Mean to 'Have Dominion' over the Earth?" *Dialog* 10 (1971): 223.

Features of the older creation account, found in Genesis 2,[17] have been distorted, largely by men, to oppress women through thirty centuries. Comments from three writers—Phyllis Trible, Robert Alter, and Wilda Gafney—are linked here. In chapter 2, God first created *ha'adam* (the human), not *man* nor *Adam* the proper name, from *ha'adamah* (the soil). Aware of *ha'adam's* isolated, lonely state, God causes part of *ha'adam's* (the human's) *tzela* (side) to be modified or fashioned during a deep sleep, for the first time into two persons. At that concurrent point, *ish* (man) speaks for the first time. He expresses delight that *ishsha* (woman) is his companion. With both created *good* by God alone and equal in strength, man calls attention to woman's effective nature (*ezer*), not what tradition calls "mere help." Be aware that *ezer* also describes *God's* help or power twenty times in the Hebrew Bible. *Sexuality* is characterized in chapter 1 through Hebrew terms *neqeba* and *zakar*—*female* and *male* that refer to physical relating; here in the creation account sexuality reflects gender or social relating—*woman* and *man* (*ishsha* and *ish*). "Bone of bone and flesh of flesh" explains the relational partnership of woman and man, from strength to weakness. Unity, as mutual companions—a feature missing in God's prior creation of animals—now comes into being (v. 23). Being naked suits the companions' way of existing.

Genesis 3 details include the appearance of a cunning beast—the snake—which engages speech with the independent woman. The Divine had given to the original earth creature, before the creature became distinct by sex, a limit—not to eat of one particular tree in Paradise. Woman interrupts the snake, adding that they were not even to touch that tree lest they die. The serpent assures her that rather than die, upon eating from it they will come to be like God, knowing good and evil. On seeing the desired tree, woman, fully aware, eats. And without question, the man follows her example and offer. They both longed *to see as God sees*. Having both *dis*obeyed Yahweh God, they acquired a sense of being without defense.[18] They then realized their nakedness and knew shame. Together they combined fig leaves to cover their genitalia.

Fearing Yahweh, they hid when they sensed God walking in the Garden. Confronted by the Divine, the two transferred blame. Man blamed the woman and also God for creating her for man's own disobedience; woman blamed the serpent for causing her to disobey. In that context of rebellion in which both man and woman chose to be their own God instead of granting unique honor to Yahweh, punishment followed. From then on, the snake, which had been revered in the ancient world as a form of divine being, was cursed to slither on the ground. Its persistent conflict with people would follow too. The woman would

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17 Recall that chapter numbers were not designated for the printed text until much later.

18 Armstrong, *In the Beginning*, 29.

know severe pain in giving birth, and she would long unnaturally to have man's attention. And the man would find working with the cursed, often drought-prone soil to be most painful. Further, for him to assume control over woman[19] would cause their separation. Power over woman, with whom man had been creatively intended to share full equity, would ever reflect *their* disobedience.

Punished, humans have persisted in their failure. Woman and man, having lost their previous enjoyment of tilling (serving) and keeping (protecting) the Garden—their authentic and mutual care marred and Yahweh God afraid that they might attain eternal life on their own—together, equally at fault, were ejected from Paradise. Sex stereotypes and patriarchal male power over female express *dis*obedience; they typify direct perversion of God's created design for human goodness. About such reality, Trible observes: "The Yahwist narrative tells us who we are (creatures of equality and mutuality) and who we have become (creatures of oppression)."[20]

Now that we have reviewed the Hebrew human creation accounts, we think more of what tradition has conveyed through the centuries. Many men subtly or boldly justify their dominance, control, or feelings of superiority over women. And many women, along with men, prefer to deny or explain away feminist translations of the Hebrew because "too much would need to change" for themselves and others.

The greatest harm results from the wrong translation that *man*, or *Adam*, was created first and that woman therefore deserves to be cast as inferior. A mere "helpmate" from man's rib to treat his loneliness, she fails to provide true partnership. Such textual misreading disowns the actual meaning of the Hebrew term *kenegdo*. More than a dozen years ago, Mennonite Brethren writer Randy Klaasen drew from other writers to clarify the term, specifically from Carol Meyers's translation "suitable counterpart" and Phyllis Trible's "companion corresponding to."[21] Trible reminds readers that "strength, aggressiveness, dominion and power over do not characterize the man in Genesis 2,"[22] in created goodness. Such qualities reflect *punishment* for wrongdoing. And ongoing negation of the woman has justified violence against women today by weak men who justify their power "because they can."

Patriarchy often faults women more than men for sin. According to theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, such theology faults woman's "greater apt-

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19 Gafney's midrash suggests *with* instead of *over*, in *Womanist Midrash*, 25.

20 Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, 81.

21 Randy Klaasen, "'*Ēzer* and Exodus," *Direction* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 18–32, http://www.directionjournal.org/35/1/ezer-and-exodus.html, accessed May 20, 2018. Klaasen cites Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 85, and Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, 90.

22 Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, 76.

ness for sin, her lesser spirituality."[23] Know, however, that *sin* first appeared in Genesis 4, not in this Hebrew text. Only in the fourth century did the phrase "fall from grace" emerge, along with the "assumption that sexual desire was inherently sinful."[24] Tradition has ingrained that woman, ranking first in the order of sin after being second in the order of creation, alone was seduced by the snake. Then biased interpreters welcomed Jewish texts being adapted, as in I Timothy 2:11–15 (NRSV): "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing. . . ." Or, I Corinthians 11 where Paul "constructs a hierarchy that diminishes woman's God-likeness."[25]

To the extent that we believe such views, to a similar extent we can change such beliefs.[26] Christians need to own and repent of the distortions that we prolong. We must admit being party to "why things are the way they are." Women are abused, in part, because parents, Sunday or Bible school teachers, and leaders of "children's time" during worship teach that man came first and woman last in creation. The ranking of *first* has more often than not suggested privilege or preference. Many have been somewhat duped into thinking that boys are more worthy of value than girls. Some men have presumed through adulthood their right to take advantage of women in physical or emotional ways, having learned much earlier that women can be more blamed than men for sin. And too many women fail to be convinced of their created goodness as equal with men, a natural defense toward abuse. My bias holds as well that too many abused women fail to be radical, to convince leadership that distorted understanding of Genesis texts has allowed or endorsed abuse.

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23 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983), 94.

24 John Gross, "Free Will and How Sex Came to be Called a Sin," review of *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent: Sex and Politics in Early Christianity*, by Elaine Pagels, *New York Times, June 28, 1988, Books of the Times.*

25 Helen Schungel-Straumann, "On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered," in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis, ed*. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 59–60.

26 Although Elizabeth Cady Stanton's translation team did limited work with the Genesis text in her late nineteenth century book *The Woman's Bible*, the traditional image of Eve was not thoroughly examined before feminists did so in the 1960s. Response varies. Four decades ago, Mennonite Bible professor Perry Yoder called for radical change. He commended Paul's Galatians 3:27–28 ("in Christ, neither male nor female") text rather than calling for women's silence in public worship (see I Timothy 2 or I Corinthians 14). Error persists from those who promote man's being normative as God's image whereas woman images God only in a secondary sense. Others inclined to be judgmental of women may suggest that only man is fully a human being.

Why do many people, including some leaders and theologians, remain so resistant to feminist (white), womanist (African American) or *mujerist* (Hispanic) scholars who call attention to faithful translation and interpretation of texts? Because of ignorance? Because of failure to own the dilemma? Because they honestly wish to believe that women are inferior and deserve abuse? Because "too much would need to change"?

Many Mennonites adhere to *sola scriptura*, the idea that we look only to scripture for insight. In that claim, we deny how greatly we too are influenced by tradition. Granted, we do not honor church fathers as do most Roman Catholics, but their views and tradition do shape ours.

In her book *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, church history scholar Elaine Pagels discusses the sway of church fathers.[27] From the fifth century on, Augustine's influence shaped a theory of original sin and pessimism toward sexuality and "the flesh." For him, in contrast to Jewish predecessors, woman's formation from a rib explained her weaker nature. "A husband is meant to rule over his wife as the Spirit rules the flesh," he said. Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, stressed that woman's entire, defective nature is inferior; she should naturally be subject to man.[28] Already in the second century, Tertullian had taught that, like Eve, all women are "the devil's gateway." She, the first deserter of divine law, destroyed "God's image, man."[29]

Did Protestant Reformers enable women? Historian Elise Boulding suggests that "Luther and Calvin set back at least a hundred years the progress of

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27 Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 114.

28 Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 96.

29 Pamela Milne, "Genesis from Eve's Point of View," *Washington Post*, March 26, 1989, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1989/03/26/genesis-from-eves-point-of-view/dc371184-1f4c-4142-ac2d-d5efee72a0da/, accessed October 7, 2018.

Another influence on attitudes toward and treatment of women based on Genesis creation accounts was false judgment of women as being witches. Readers of the book *The Malleus Maleficarum* (The Witches Hammer) by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, trans. Rev. Montague Summers (New York: Dover, 1971), or those who have been to the Museum about Witch Trials in Salem Massachusetts, know more. *The Malleus Maleficarum*, written by two Dominican Inquisitors in 1486, formed a handbook for persecuting witches. Blamed for their limited role as "helpmeet" to man, many women—faulted for a feeble mind, slippery tongue, inordinate passion, or lack of discipline—were hunted as witches. Linked with devils, witches were faulted by critics for affecting a man's private part, causing hailstorms, or afflicting animals. Midwife witches could be faulted for killing or offering a child to a devil. Yet, the resource assures, "Never had an innocent person been punished on suspicion of witchcraft" (136).

the Middle Ages in education for women."[30] Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests that the Reformation only slightly modified patriarchal patterns. For example, Calvin understood women's subordination to men not as a state of being inferior but as God's created social order. God had ordained the "rule of some and the subjugation of others." Both, he said, need to accept "their own place" in this divine scheme of things.[31] Sound familiar?

Early Anabaptist life does hint toward re-vision:

- The 1527 Schleitheim Confession refers to "brethren" seven times and to "brethren and sisters" ten times.
- Women knew and quoted considerable scripture in personal letters prior to their death; one third of early Anabaptists martyred were women.
- Anabaptists used a hymnal of 102 songs by Soetgen van der Houte, published in 1592, in worship gatherings.
- Anabaptists urged "obedience to God rather than to men."[32]
- Wolfgang Schaufele states: "Woman emerges in Anabaptism as a fully emancipated person in religious matters and as an independent bearer of Christian conviction."[33]

Do such compliments describe Mennonite women today?

Change regarding traditional notions about created humanity has occurred on occasion. I view such examples noted below as hopeful but slim. I experience them to be outnumbered or overshadowed by Mennonite reliance on traditional readings. I have known only a couple Mennonite biblical scholars or theological leaders to have publicly validated the understanding of simultaneous creation of woman and man as important. We need assurance—lived patterns today—of mutual agreement that, with equity, we image or represent God. Together we determine whether to avoid freedom and go on seeing women as inferior or more prone to disobedience than men. Toward that goal, I believe that Phyllis Trible's pioneering translation of *ha'adam* as *the human* or earth *creature*, not as *man*—plus the Wisdom of her entire chapter—continues to lead toward less

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30 Elise Boulding, *The Underside of History* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1976), 527, in "The Climate for Women in Early Anabaptism," paper by Dorothy Yoder Nyce for Professor Eleanor Commo McLaughlin (Andover Newton Theological Seminary, May 1977), 13.

31 Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 97–98.

32 Dorothy Yoder Nyce, exam responses for Anabaptist History and Theology course, Professor C. J. Dyck (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, January 1979), 7, 25, 33.

33 Wolfgang Schaufele, "The Missionary Vision and Activity of the Anabaptist Laity," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (April 1962): 108.

human abuse by Christians. The following examples, moreover, hold promise as building blocks of a less abusive Mennonite interpretation of Genesis 1–3.

- Retired Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) Hebrew professor Perry Yoder already in 1974 addressed Eastern District Mennonite women.[34] He called for revolution to live out the goodness of humanity in creation. Abuse of women by men who presume that women are "lesser" and/or to be silent during worship reflects failure to receive the equity that Jesus's life enabled, Yoder said. To promote sex stereotypes or justify the negation of women based on church fathers' statements lives out what followed *disobedience* in the Garden, he added.

- Gene Roop, with help from students and church groups, published the Believers Church Bible Commentary *Genesis* in 1987, more than thirty years ago.[35] In it, he clarified that God alone creates woman and man. Dominion, he states, refers to "responsible care"—care for the world that reflects God's care. He admits that the text does not use the words "fall" or "sin," that disobedience is the preferred term. Tradition, Roop adds, not the text, teaches that the serpent addressed the woman because of her being weak, having been created after man. God's good intent for mutual, human companionship turned into acceptance of domination, man over woman. But that rule conveys disobedience, not Divine will. It too often excuses abuse.

- Meghan Florian, in a 2012 *Mennonite World Review*[36] blog excerpt of her chapel talk at Duke Divinity seminary sees *partnership* rather than *hierarchy* in the word *ezer* (companion). She confronts the faulty idea of an imbedded power struggle—that for women to win men must lose.

Questions persist. Does traditional insight into human creation shape your hope? What will historians say about twenty-first-century Mennonite interpretations of the Genesis creation accounts as visible in our sermons, Sunday school teaching, and published articles? How intent on revolution are we—on declaring and upholding with conviction that *all people* are created in God's image?

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34 Perry Yoder, "Toward a Biblical Understanding of Womanhood," Eastern District's *The Messenger* (1974): 3–6.

35 Eugene F. Roop, Believers Church Bible Commentary *Genesis* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1987).

36 Meghan Florian, "Flesh of My Flesh, Created as Helpers," *Mennonite World Review* (November 23, 2012): 4. Unwisely, Florian mistranslates the Hebrew term *ha'adam* (the human) as *Adam* prior to the social terms for *woman* and *man* (*ishsha* and *ish*). Does this matter? I think so. May we grow in alertness to what helps or hinders relating.

Are we creative in diverse partnership, in blessing truly mutual relating between people of any gender, in scripture interpretation that confirms God's original design of goodness? Will revolution or resistance to past error enable Wisdom, empathy, and compassion all around?

Toward a Missiology of Migration and Transnationality

by Jonathan Bornman

I write this introduction sitting in the living room of a Mennonite pastor's home in the small village of Somanya, Ghana, forty-five minutes outside of Accra, the capital. The pastor, two friends, and I spent the morning in lively discussion about the church in its local context and its place in the world. The realities of migration and youth were a significant part of our conversation. We noticed the abundance of children and youth in Africa, where the median age is 19.7 years.[1] And beyond Africa, of the 70.8 million displaced people around the world (including 25.9 million refugees), over half are under the age of eighteen.[2] Transnationality, religion, migration, and youth: how might these realities inform and transform missiology?

One of the paramount needs of missiology in the twenty-first century is to articulate the *missio dei* in a world where, more than ever before, people are on the move. The largest Anabaptist communions in the world—in Congo and Ethiopia—are engaged in culture-crossing missions at the same time as many of their members live in North America and Europe. These Anabaptists from the Global South are planting churches, engaging in missional activities wherever they find themselves, and joining Mennonite church bodies. LMC—a fellowship of Anabaptist churches—for instance, has member congregations whose members are part of African, Caribbean, and Latino diasporas. What missiology will guide us toward this reality of a transnational church of Christ-followers fulfilling Christ's radical call to love God and neighbor?

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1 "Population of Africa (2020)—Worldometer," *Worldometer*, 2019, https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/.

2 "UNHCR—Figures at a Glance," UNHCR, June 19, 2019, https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

For typical white North American Anabaptists, a reflection on their history of migration read through the lens of growing transnationalism may help us develop such a missiology relevant for our time. In this vein, Matthew Krabill and Allison Norton call for missiology to "move beyond strategies that privilege western agency and action to engage with the complexities of changing global processes, acknowledging that Christianity in the west will be increasingly associated with diaspora populations."[3]

The challenges and opportunities presented by migration and transnationality—issues that touch all the nations of the world—affect youth disproportionately. Those of us meeting in the pastor's home knew of such stories firsthand. We noted, for instance, the story of one young man from the village of Somanya who acquired a tourist visa against the community's counsel and went to North America to attempt to find work, only to realize that without papers he could not succeed. Eventually, the church raised money to fly him home. He was one of the "fortunate" ones. Oppressive conditions of injustice and hopelessness cause some youth to risk all—for example, entering rubber rafts to cross the Mediterranean for an uncertain future in Europe. These realities have not yet received adequate attention from missiologists.

Jehu Hanciles lays the groundwork for a missiological look at migration and its potential to impact Western churches.[4] And Matthew Krabill's dissertation, "Menno Was a Migrant with No Headquarters: The Polycentric Ecclesial Existence of African Immigrant Mennonite Congregations in LA," describes African immigrant churches within the North American Mennonite church.[5] But by and large, the impact and changing realities of migration and transnationalism remain under-researched within missiology, with only a limited number of journal articles or monographs addressing these issues. The current context demands a fresh missiology informed by the wealth of material available in anthropological studies and the realities of a transnational world—a missiology that equips the church to fulfill Jesus's commission to make disciples.

In this article, I hope to contribute to research on such a missiology—focusing particularly on youth, who are disproportionately affected by migration and whose value is often overlooked—by refining the conceptualizations of "youth" and "transnationalism" and reviewing a selection of relevant literature. Conceptualizing youth and their religious commitments in a globalized world

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3 Mathew Krabill and Allison Norton, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: A Critical Appraisal of Diaspora Missiology," *Missiology: An International Review* 43, no. 4 (2015): 452.

4 Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2013).

5 Matthew Krabill, "Menno Was a Migrant with No Headquarters: The Polycentric Ecclesial Existence of African Immigrant Mennonite Congregations in LA" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2019).

where migration and transnationality are the experience of increasingly more significant portions of society is an important lens for missiology. This review focuses on African youth who, following multi-reasoned dreams, migrate to North America and Europe. It includes selected journal articles and chapters of edited volumes between 1996 and 2012 related to globalization, migration, religion in migration, transnational religious groups, conceptualizations of youth, youth in Africa, generations, intergenerational relations, diaspora, gender, and transformation of public spaces. The literature review divides into two major sections—youth and transnational religion—with many cross-linkages, since youth are the ones contesting the transnational religious space.

Youth

Positionality of Youth

The position of African young people, whether in Africa or in the diaspora, is full of complexities, contradictions, and exceptions. The majority live in societies where the interaction of global and local pressures leads to the fragmentation, dissolution, and loss of local culture and memory in societies undergoing demographic, political, media, cultural, and religious transformations.[6] African young people are described as victims, marginalized, excluded, powerless, violent and subjected to violence,[7] positioning themselves in society,[8] leading counter-discourses,[9] using their bodies as weapon and text,[10] having escaped the control of government, familial, and social structures, and living in a new

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6 Mamadou Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: African Youth and Public Space," *African Studies Review* 46, no. 2 (September 2003): 1–12, doi:10.2307/1514823; Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations* (Paris: Karthala, 2012).

7 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures"; Mamadou Diouf, "Afterward," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005), 229–34; Tshikala K. Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa: Addis Ababa, Dakar and Kinshasa," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005), 215–28; Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana, eds., *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005).

8 Catrine Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2006), http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:nai:diva-495.

9 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*.

10 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures."

"geography."[11] This characterization of living in a new geography is particularly appropriate for many African youth in the diaspora who are elites, many with newly earned college degrees, well positioned to influence their transnational communities.[12]

Defining "Youth"

Common simplistic usage of the word "youth" must be called into question, beginning by asking, Who or what is "youth"? Because of social and cultural complexities, the term defies universal definition.[13] According to Jon Abbink, "the socially and culturally accepted initiation of the young into adult society—that in many societies used to be ritually marked by rites of transition and a period of seclusion and training—can no longer be properly accomplished in Africa."[14] Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana say that childhood and youth are best understood as socially situated and culturally constructed.[15] And Catrine Christiansen et al. state that the "common anthropological . . . definition of youth . . . [as] a developmental phase in a life course . . . anchored in the idea of life stages in which youth is defined in relation to the correspondence between social and physical developmental thresholds" is flawed. This definition, they point out, too simply "conflat[es] psychological, physical, and social maturation and the idea that lives can be compartmentalized into discrete stages."[16] Turning to biological age, Abbink "pragmatically limit[s] the category of 'youth' in Africa to the 14–35 age bracket. Under 14, they are children, usually dependent on older people and not accepted as adults, while over thirty-five they are, or were, more or less expected to be socially independent, have a family and have acquired some social status of their own."[17]

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11 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures."

12 Afe Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 4 (December 2004): 493–522, doi:10.1163/1570066042564392; Hauke Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots—the Role of Diasporic Elites," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005).

13 Deborah Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa: Introduction to Parts 1 and 2," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2000): 113–20, doi:10.1353/anq.2000.0003.

14 Jon Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa: The Politics of Despair and Renewal," in *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, vol. 4, African Dynamics (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/14741.

15 Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*.

16 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*, 14.

17 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa," 6.

Concepts of youth in the literature are closely interrelated with generational and intergenerational conflict and cooperation.[18] Yet as Karl Mannheim points out in his seminal paper "The Problem of Generations," the concept of "generation" is problematic, potentially referring to social location, biological age group (very hard to define), or a cohort shaped by a shared historical event.[19] Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc critique the tendency to define youth in opposition to elders, saying other forces at work (political, social, economic) require strategies of cooperation, not only on the macro- but also on the micro-scale, the intimate relations within families. They call for renewed intergenerational research that concentrates on the relationships between generations. Abbink describes a struggle between "younger" and "older" generations (while cognizant of the complication of the terms), where traditional African societal systems for defining generations and expectations have broken down and seem only to be adhered to in the "breach rather than the keeping,"[20] where children are valued and youth are considered a menace.

Modern conceptions of youth seem to be inherently bipolar; on the one hand, youth signify "exclusion, impossibility, emasculation, denigration, and futility," and, on the other hand, they are considered "a constant source of creativity, ingenuity, possibility, empowerment," and "a source of alternative, yet-to-be-imagined futures."[21] The young are simultaneously portrayed as "the ter-

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18 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations*; Alessandro Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise: Entre individualisme et formation de la 'new generation,'" in *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*, eds. Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 469–93; Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*; Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa"; Murray Last, "Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria, 1750–2000," in *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, eds. G. J. Abbink and W. M. J. van Kessel, vol. 4, African Dynamics (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 37–54, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/14741; Nathanlie Mondain et al., "Migration et responsabilités intergénérationnelles: Implications pour la transition à l'âge adulte des jeunes migrantes sénégalais," in *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*, eds. Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 259–97; Bob White, "Pour l'amour du pays: Générations et genres dans les clips video à Kinshasa, R. D. Congo," in *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*, eds. Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 711–63; Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

19 Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Karl Mannheim: Essays*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (Routledge, 1972), 276–322.

20 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa," 5.

21 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth from the Past to the Postcolony," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005), 29.

rors of the present, the errors of the past, the prospect of the future."[22] African societies increasingly look to young people as instruments of change uniquely positioned to speak in a changing world, yet at the same time construe them as a threat.[23] Are youth "makers" or "breakers" of society? An emerging influence or submerged by power? Combatants or healers? Onlookers or activists?[24]

Perspectives on Youth

Within the literature, there are five major perspectives from which to analyze youth: 1) "lost generation," 2) street culture, 3) agency, 4) integrated, and 5) social shifters. I explore each of these perspectives below. In the end, I find the idea of youth as "social shifters" most helpful for understanding youth in transnational diaspora communities.

1. Lost Generation

In my research in Harlem among the youth of the Senegalese diaspora, I have heard the term "lost youth" in a variety of formulations, from both older and younger persons. Deborah Durham states that "claims to the position of youth, claims about the nature of youth, and moral claims about youth are centrally involved in the reinvention of political and social space."[25] This helps me understand what is going on when the elders in the community are characterizing the youth hanging out on 116th street as "lost," getting into trouble, fighting, and so on. And the protestation of those same youth saying they are true Muslims. The fact that both younger and older members of the community talk about the "lost youth" must be interrogated. According to Durham:

> In the wake of World War I, the discourse of youth, and of the "lost generation" (a term also often used for youth in Africa at the end of the twentieth century, see Cruise O'Brien 1996), was part of the grounds of fascism, communism, and the political struggles leading to the second world war. The discourse of youth is just as critical across Africa today—indeed the recurrence of the term "lost generation" is not insignificant—and the consequences just as great. Youth enter political space as saboteurs—as political actors whose politics is to open up discourses on the nature of society in its broadest and most specific terms.[26]

In Uganda, the *Balokole* (the "born again") construction of the world represents an opposition between generations—the "born again" youth and the

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22 Comaroff and Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth," 20.

23 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures," 2–3.

24 Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*, 2–3.

25 Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa," 118.

26 Durham, 118.

"lost" elders. The past is presented in this vision as the age of darkness and contrasted with the idea of a moral revolution that will guarantee a shining future for Uganda.[27] In the social situation of four "power inversions," or *jihads*, where youth took control in Northern Nigeria, at certain junctures "the old are considered to have failed the societies they led. Hence the failure of the old can be as significant an issue as the success of the young."[28] The idea of a "lost generation" is commonplace in discourse about youth, but these examples from Ugandan Pentecostals and Nigerian Muslims question who is lost—the youth or their elders?

2. Street Culture

The emergence of street cultures among postcolonial youth living on the margins of urban society has prompted some to look at the phenomenon from the perspective of youth cultures.[29] From this viewpoint, African youth create their own, often violent, culture on the street as a result of an epistemological rupture they live within and the appearance of the localized global that they negotiate by cultural borrowing.[30] Youth culture is "uniquely able to link locals across transnational space"[31] and creatively engage the margins, finding new opportunities. However, this perspective is challenged by those who consider studies focused on "youth culture" as subcultures to be in error in their projection of youth as an entity detached from the surrounding world.[32] Another critique against focusing on "youth culture" is the reality that in some settings youth are so dominated and marginalized that they are unable to participate in the creation of youth cultures, even to the point of speaking of "non-place."[33]

3. Agency

In their review of literature from 1990 to 2000,[34] Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc identify a focus on roles and conditions of life—the misery, violence, and dysfunctionality of society. After 2000, however, they see a shift toward understanding youth to have significant agency. They connect this to keen interest in globalization and the idea that youth had privileged access to new cultural

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27 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise," 479.

28 Last, "Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria," 37–38.

29 Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa"; Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures"; Comaroff and Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth."

30 Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa."

31 Comaroff and Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth," 29.

32 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*.

33 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise."

34 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations*.

products. They note that research on music gave proof of this agency[35] as did the strategic use of violence in some contexts. However, others[36] note that this was critiqued by those who saw that agency varies greatly by context, remaining an aspiration of youth, most of whom are excluded from opportunity to exercise their agency.[37] The "agency" perspective shows that youth are neither universally manipulated nor passive actors but individuals attempting to chart their course.[38]

4. Calls for Integrated Perspectives

Additional perspectives also exist, such as the "interventionist" response, which calls for remedial programs; "rights discourse," which develops normative approaches, yet conditions on the ground are unfavorable; and "descriptive-analytic" reactions, which develop historical and sociologically grounded explanations.[39]

In the midst of all the perspectives, there are general calls for more integrated proposals. For example, Abbink states that "three perspectives . . . —the agency, the interventionist and the analytic—must come together in a realist understanding of the experiences of youth in Africa,"[40] and Christiansen et al. focus on the "intersection between agency and social forces."[41]

5. Social Shifters

In my review of this literature, the perspective on youth that seems most directly relevant to how I view the Senegalese youth in Harlem is the idea of youth as "shifters" or "social shifters."

> A shifter is a special kind of deictic or indexical term, a term that works not through absolute referentiality to a fixed context, but one that relates the speaker to a relational, or indexical, context ("here" or "us" are such terms). A shifter has the capability of sometimes going further and bringing into discursive awareness the metalinguistic features of the conversation—that is, it can go beyond immediate relationships being negotiated and draw attention to the structure and its categories that produce or enable the encounter. As people bring the concept of youth to bear on situations, they situate

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35 White, "Pour l'amour du pays."

36 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations*.

37 Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa"; Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*.

38 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

39 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

40 Abbink, ed., 25.

41 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*, 16.

themselves in a social landscape of power, rights, expectations, and relation-ships—indexing both themselves and the topology of that social landscape. They do so not necessarily . . . in a static manner, but in a dynamic, contes-tive, and imaginative way. Shifters work metalinguistically, drawing attention to specific relations within a structure of relations, to the structure itself. This seems to be particularly the case with the mobilization of the idea of "youth" in social life.[42]

Considering the goals, vision, and discourse of Senegalese youth in Harlem, the concept of shifters fits. These youth are aware of the power difference between themselves and older members of their community, between themselves and religious leaders, and with regard to the larger American society. And they are creating ways to tip that imbalance a bit in their favor. By being the best Mus-lims in their community and by serving within their community more than others, they win agency. Their youth movement has gained enough momentum that they draw attention from rival religious leaders, thus moving from unde-sirable to desired members of the community. Their uniforms, worn at public events, have moved them from invisible to visible. As Durham observes, this "situates them in the social landscape,"[43] and the community must now reckon with them.

Researchers in the field have also adopted this idea of youth as social shifters. The term is understood to denote the relational concept of youth as situated in a dynamic context. "Social shifters" describes the way youth are positioned and are positioning themselves within society, with the capacity to create social configurations.[44] Rejecting all simplistic definitions of children and youth, we should regard them as "beings-in-the-present and as social actors."[45]

Regardless of how African youth are defined, however, they are marginal-ized and excluded, liminal and interstitial subjects. Their ability to cross bound-aries and inhabit multiple worlds often is both vulnerable and violent. On the flip side, young people's ability to mediate these contradictions in African so-ciety places them "squarely in the centre and generates tremendous power."[46]

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42 Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa," 116.

43 Durham, 116.

44 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*, 12.

45 Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*, 2.

46 Boeck and Honwana, 10.

Youth as Transnational Religious Actors

Discourse about morality and youth is essential for understanding youth. The conversion of large numbers of Ugandan youth to Pentecostalism, for example, has modified the understandings and practices surrounding intergenerational relations in the country[47] "by assigning to the youth the role of moral revolution guides."[48] Youth use language of deliverance and sexual abstinence as tools for liberation from the past, finding in the Pentecostal message the possibility of distancing themselves from the moral and economic obligations of their families. There is also evidence of Sufi Muslim youth who describe conversion experiences in ways similar to Pentecostal use of the term "born-again" as they speak of being made clean and "the counter being set to zero."[49]

Summary of Learnings about Youth

All conceptualizations of youth are socially and culturally constructed, influenced by historical, geographical, political, religious, and educational contexts. Inherent in these conceptualizations, whether imposed or appropriated, are dynamics of power and control, rights, worldview, access to resources, and means of communication. The idea of youth as social shifters—pointing out imbalances and bringing into awareness hidden things; socially situated in a dynamic context; and able to see opportunity in the margins, cross boundaries, and mediate contradictions—offers a powerful analytical tool to interrogate the ways Africans in the diaspora conceptualize youth.

Religion in Migration, Diaspora, Transnationalism

Issues of religion and migration are neither new nor modern.[50] Christian faith has been from its inception multilingual and transnational. Consider the Old Testament Daniel, a young Hebrew elite taken into slavery in Babylon, where he rose to a high position in government yet still prayed three times a day in front of a window facing Jerusalem.[51] He also—along with his three friends Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael—negotiated not eating the king's food because it would make them unclean.[52] Or consider the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2,

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47 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise," 483.

48 Gusman, 471.

49 Audrain Xavier, "Du « 'Ndigël' Avorté » Au Parti de La Vérité," *Politique Africaine*, no. 4 (2004): 99.

50 Ulrich Berner, "Mission and Migration in the Roman Empire," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 43–56.

51 Daniel 6:10

52 Daniel 1:8

where "Jews from every nation under heaven" (fifteen nations are listed) were gathered. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter's sermon, three thousand were baptized. As Jews, they had traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost and were now returning home baptized into the Way of Jesus the Messiah.

Many of the authors in this literature review, in their research of the Pentecostal movement and its transnational nature, assume the readers' familiarity with these stories.

Defining Transnationalism

The simplest definition of religious transnationalism is, when "people move, they take their religions with them."[53] Bertrand Badie and Mane-Claude Smouts provide a more formal definition: "Any relation which, deliberately or by its nature, constructs itself within a global space beyond the context of the nation-state, and which escapes, at least partially, the control or mediating action of States."[54] Bruno Riccio defines the term from a person-centered perspective, stating, "Migrants, it is argued, now tend to live their lives simultaneously across different nation-states, being both 'here' and 'there,' crossing geographical and political boundaries. 'Transnationalism' is the term commonly used to contextualize and define such migrants' cultural, economic, political and social experience."[55]

Numerous authors criticize the older Ellis Island straight-line model of immigration and assimilation[56] and propose new patterns of religious transnation-

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53 Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 7–8, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

54 Bertrand Badie and Mane-Claude Smouts, "Le retournement du monde: Sociologie de la scène international," (Paris: Presses de la Foundation National des Sciences Politiques/Dalloz, 1992), cited in Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 80.

55 Bruno Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'? Senegalese Migrants' Ambivalent Experiences and Multiple Trajectories," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (2001): 583, doi:10.1080/13691830120090395.

56 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Mary C. Waters et al., "Segmented Assimilation Revisited: Types of Acculturation and Socioeconomic Mobility in Young Adulthood," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 7 (July 1, 2010): 1168–93, doi:10.1080/01419871003624076; James V. Spickard, "Networks, Homes, or Congregations? Exploring the Locus of Immigrant Religiosity," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African

alism, such as religious bi-localism,[57] religious cacophony,[58] reverse missions,[59] South-South religious trade,[60] transnational organization theory, and deterritorialized religious identity.[61]

Factors Driving Religious Transnationalism

Religion is becoming increasingly important in a globalized world, where it is difficult to separate the local from the global. The rebirth of religion[62] is attributed to many factors, including changing demographics,[63] "the crisis in the old mechanisms of identification [giving] back to the 'sacred realm' an importance and a social function,"[64] and, similarly, the "disenchantment" of the West producing powerful religious movements expressing a strong desire to "globalize" by taking advantage of spaces opened by globalization.[65]

The main factors in transnationalism are the mass media explosion and the movements of people leading to deterritorialization of culture and the delocalization of identity and community.[66] The forces and factors of globalization and the concomitant need to emphasize difference lead to a search for identity[67]

Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 23–41; Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots."

57 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?"

58 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*.

59 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, eds., *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005); Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare."

60 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Spickard, "Networks, Homes, or Congregations?"; Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

61 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism"; Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2005).

62 Waldo César, "From Babel to Pentecost: A Social-Historical Study of the Growth of Pentecostalism," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 37.

63 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*.

64 Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism."

65 Ed van Hoven, "Saint Mediation in the Era of Transnationalism: The Da'ira of the Jakhanke Marabouts," *Africa (Edinburgh University Press)* 73, no. 2 (June 2003): 290.

66 Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism."

67 Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana Uni-

that takes on new "significance in the context where nation-states and nationalism no longer necessarily constitute the primary physical and ideological contexts in which identity and community are imagined and political allegiance expressed."[68] Other factors include the desire to escape or exit one's situation to embrace opportunity elsewhere.[69]

Political and socioeconomic discourses on migration and diaspora often ignore religious factors driving transnationalism, but religion can be viewed as the "motor" of African diaspora formation and identity construction.[70] The rise of "reverse-mission" religious movements, both Christian and Islamic, engaged in transmitting their tradition beyond their "geo-ethnic" contexts, illustrates how Africans have instrumentalized globalization for religious purposes.[71] Four themes emerge for the study of religion in African migration:[72] 1) the globalizing effects of local religious units in the migration process,[73] 2) the religious

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versity Press, 2001), 3.

68 Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism," 81.

69 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise"; Ebenezer Obadare and Wale Adebanwi, "The Visa God: Would-Be Migrants and the Instramentalization of Religion," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 31–48, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

70 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*; Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots"; Michelle Johnson, "'The Proof Is on My Palm': Debating Ethnicity, Islam and Ritual in a New African Diaspora," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 50–77, doi:10.1163/157006606775569604; Monika Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space through Religious and Political Events: How Senegalese Migrants Became a Part of Harlem, New York," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 4 (2004): 468–92, doi:10.1163/1570066042564428.

71 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*; Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots."

72 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*.

73 van Hoven, "Saint Mediation in the Era of Transnationalism"; Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?"; Obadare and Adebanwi, "The Visa God"; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*; Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise."

motives for migration,[74] 3) religious vitality as a result of migration,[75] and 4) the dynamics of religious networking in the diaspora.[76] African transnational religious actors rely on diverse social structures and networks operating on both local and global scales.[77]

A Shift toward Religious Identities

Africans face stigmatization and racism in the cities of Europe and America. Religious communities, churches and mosques, *dahiras*,[78] and small group meetings offer places of refuge, consolation, and belonging.[79] Many African youths find recourse in Pentecostal and other Christian and Islamic revivalism, all of which often share a repulsion for "traditional African culture." The youth are "attracted by the new religious movements and are joining (in large numbers) a discourse of morality and identity that holds out the promise of regeneration and collective power with transnational resonance."[80]

These religious networks offer frameworks for youth to create new networks promoting joint economic action and new work ethics, creating what Abbink

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74 Géraldine Mossière, "Mobility and Belonging among Transnational Congolese Pentecostal Congregations: Modernity and the Emergence of Socioeconomic Differences," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), https://brill.com/view/title/16411; Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare."

75 César, "From Babel to Pentecost"; Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise"; Andre Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 41–61; Damaris Seleina Parsitau and Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "Gospel without Borders: Gender Dynamics of Transnational Religious Movements in Kenya and the Kenyan Diaspora," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 185–209, https://brill.com/view/title/16411; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

76 Parsitau and Mwaura, "Gospel without Borders: Gender Dynamics of Transnational Religious Movements in Kenya and the Kenyan Diaspora"; Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?"; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

77 Mossière, "Mobility and Belonging among Transnational Congolese Pentecostal Congregations: Modernity and the Emergence of Socioeconomic Differences."

78 From Arabic for "circle"; refers to Sufi religious organizations.

79 Benjamin F. Soares, "An African Muslim Saint and His Followers in France," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no. 5 (September 2004): 913–27, doi:10.1080/1369183042000245615; Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare."

80 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa," 21.

calls networks of opportunity. Transnational Africans carry with them their sensitivity to spiritual power dynamics and a worldview influenced by African Traditional Religion; Muslims and Christians find ways, from within their respective traditions, to respond to and capitalize on the fears, needs, and understandings related to spiritual powers (good and evil) that make sense from within their perspective.[81]

The Pentecostal "Fit"

Pentecostalism has benefited from and adapted to globalization. Instead of attempting to reduce the religious to the nonreligious by explaining the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in terms of social theory, we may do better to link its success to its "fit" with globalization.[82] Common characteristics of global Pentecostalism include the presence of the Holy Spirit (evidenced by speaking in tongues), a conversion experience, the Prosperity Gospel, and a dualistic worldview; these facilitate access to a "message adapted to the global scale and experienced at the recognizable level of the human body."[83] Pentecostals appropriate the objects, signs, and discourses of salvation and transformation expressed in a global war on Satan, where personal suffering is linked to global conversion. This universal framework helps Pentecostals respond to the transnational problematic, aiding their movements between the individual and the collective, the sacred and the profane, the particular and the general.[84]

Pentecostalism offers an ethical framework that fits the challenges of the global and the local; it also offers ways to creatively balance outside forces with local knowledge.[85] Pentecostal churches help migrants process one of the great

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81 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mediating Spiritual Power: African Christianity, Transnationalism and the Media," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 87–103, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

82 Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success"; Edlyne E. Anugwom, "The Bonnke Effect: Encounters with Transnational Evangelism in Southeastern Nigeria," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 211–26, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

83 Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," 57; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*; Anugwom, "The Bonnke Effect: Encounters with Transnational Evangelism in Southeastern Nigeria."

84 Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 12.

85 Paul Gifford, "The Complex Provenance of Some Elements of African Pentecostal Theology," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 62–79.

paradoxes of migration—that of living in two status systems, where "the gaining of status in one context is achieved by a loss of status in the other context."[86] In Pentecostalism, migrants find solutions to this paradox in two ways: 1) the church provides a social space for performing positive social status, and 2) "the essential embodied experience of charismatic religious experience is empowerment, with which migrants hope to overcome all obstacles hindering" them.[87] Young Muslims in the diaspora seek similar solutions.

Muslim Religious Identities

"Contemporary transnational migration can create people who find themselves unconnected with particular places, states or ethnic groups, but still faced with a burning question of who they are."[88] These deterrritorialized migrants may create "transnational imagined communities" united by religious identities. Muslims in the diaspora, for example, find and negotiate new ways of being Muslim.[89] Groups like the Muriddiya have learned to inhabit new local space in a way that results in a local rooting of the transnational network.[90] The Sufi experience of the *dahira* offers Muslims a communal space of belonging and solidarity, a place to perform social status, similar to what the church offers Pentecostals.[91] The *dahira* and other Muslim experiences of a close, ethnic diaspora community are contested.

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86 Boris Nieswand, "Charismatic Christianity in the Context of Migration: Social Status, the Experience of Migration and the Construction of Selves among Ghanaian Migrants in Berlin," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula WeisskÖppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 255.

87 Boris Nieswand, "Charismatic Christianity in the Context of Migration," 255.

88 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*, 19.

89 Soares, "An African Muslim Saint and His Followers in France"; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space"; JoAnn D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography: Sierra Leonean Muslims in America, Contemporary Ethnography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), http://www.ebrary.com/landing/site/bodleian/index-bodleian.jsp?Docid=10748744; Victoria Ebin, "Making Room versus Creating Space: The Construction of Spatial Categories by Itinerant Mouride Traders," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, eds. Barbara Daly Metcalf, Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies 22 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 92–109.

90 Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

91 Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mediating Spititual Power: African Christianity, Transnationalism and the Media"; D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography*; Johnson, "'The Proof Is on My Palm'"; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

Strategies and Paradigms of Pre-migrants

A critique of existing research on transnationalism and religion reveals studies to be a bit lopsided, concerned only with the way migrants use religion *after* they have migrated. But the way would-be migrants instrumentalize religion only makes sense if that principle is already part of their everyday social relations. This critique looks at how transnational migration is imagined and treated as a spiritual phenomenon before people migrate.[92] This helps explain the intense spiritual activity of pre-migrants who consult African traditional practitioners, participate in Pentecostal visa prayer camps,[93] or seek the aid of a marabout or Muslim saint.[94]

In the Senegalese context, the social community is partly responsible for creating bias toward transnational networks and migration, where travel becomes a rite of passage and a social norm. Pre-migrants grow up with an *imaginaire migratoire* anchored in a transnational migration process where a culture of migration is maintained and constructed by observing the experience of migrants—a culture that permits entire generations to find meaning in a translocal experience. These patterns of migration can be viewed from two perspectives: 1) as a rite of passage, a transition from young person to adult; and 2) as a phenomenon that is redefining intergenerational relations linked to a growing individualization on the part of the youth.[95]

Cautions about Oversimplifying Transnationalism

Ricco believes it is vital to "dis-aggregate the so-called 'transnational community' by recognizing and analyzing its internal tensions and the plurality of trajectories emerging from the transnational spaces."[96] He is concerned that older conceptualizations of "ethnic group" not be substituted by "transnational community." He describes Senegalese transnational migration as people engaging in economic transactions across borders and living for extended periods away from their place of origin yet returning frequently as they seek to create a whole life economically, spiritually, and socially. "Transmigrants," Riccio observes, interact with the new society in complex ways, with multiple trajectories in the diaspora. Some transmigrants participate in the host culture and seek a place for themselves in the structure of society, while others primarily identify with the

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92 Obadare and Adebanwi, "The Visa God."

93 Obadare and Adebanwi, "The Visa God."

94 van Hoven, "Saint Mediation in the Era of Transnationalism"; Soares, "An African Muslim Saint and His Followers in France."

95 Mondain et al., "Migration et responsabilités intergénérationnelles."

96 Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?," 585.

dahira life, emphasizing solidarity with other co-transmigrants even as some members secretly pursue autonomy and individuality.[97]

Additionally, researchers need to avoid homogenizing transmigrants and transnationality, to pay attention to gender and sexuality.[98] Consideration must also be paid to conflicts between diaspora groups—such as the conflict between various Islamic expressions—and how transmigrant Muslims view each other.[99]

Summary of Learnings about Transnationalism

Transnationalism is neither binational nor bipolar but an imagined translocal space inhabited in the local, with a constant awareness of the global.[100] People find ways to "write" this transnational community into the spaces wherever they live.[101] They take their religion with them when they move, adapting to the new location yet tightly connected to their community of origin. The back-and-forth flow of information, ideas, and relationships that happens as they adapt to the new local creates a translocal space that invigorates and renews religious communities at the same time as the participants are empowered and sustained. The new translocal space is neither completely here nor there; it inhabits an alternative space in between. This is not new in the history of people's experience of religious communities; what *is* new is the growing pace and pervasiveness of this experience for more and more people in the world.

Conclusion

One of the central issues of our time is the ever-increasing number of displaced people and refugees, a significant number of whom are youth. Conceptualizing these youth and their religious commitments in a globalized world—where migration and transnationality are the experience of increasingly greater portions of society—is an important lens for missiology. Young transmigrants have gifts for the communities where they settle. But will those communities receive the gifts? Can churches embrace these "social shifters," who may point out imbalances and bring hidden things into awareness? Could it be that God has "sum-

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97 Riccio, 597.

98 Ezra Chitando, "The Insider/Outsider Problem in Research on Religion and Migration," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 79–94.

99 D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography*; Johnson, "'The Proof Is on My Palm.'"

100 Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

101 D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography*.

moned from the margin"[102] these people to renew the church and to achieve his purposes in the world?

Churches and communities who are willing to have their eyes opened may find that the transnational vision of newcomers enables them to see opportunity in the margins, cross boundaries, and mediate contradictions. The flow of information, ideas, and relationships that happens in the creation of new translocal spaces has potential to invigorate and renew religious communities.

This potential warrants a call for further study of transnationality and missiology, including a review of the literature from 2012 to 2020 and additional analyses of migration patterns, taking into account the global refugee crisis that continues to reshape populations and the global church. Future research might also pair analysis of increased global migration with evidence[103] that in the United States, and potentially other locations, geographic mobility has declined for economic reasons and may be part of emerging rural-urban cultural and political divides.

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102 Lamin Sanneh, *Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

103 Richard Florida, "Why Some Americans Won't Move, Even for a Higher Salary," CityLab, May 30, 2019, https://www.citylab.com/life/2019/05/moving-location-new-city-how-much-cost-mobile-rooted-stuck/590521/.

Anabaptist Mennonite Teachings

The Light That Leads toward a Life of Conflict
Transformation through Peacebuilding in
the African Great Lakes Region

by Safari Dieudonné Kizungu

Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Kivu Province, Town of Bukavu

Against impossible odds, a young boy escaped Rwandan genocide to live a
life dedicated to active nonviolence and ethnic neutrality in the African Great
Lakes region.

At eleven years of age, Safari Dieudonné Kizungu fled one thousand kilome-
ters through the jungle, existing like a wild animal for more than two years.
Despite continuing threats, he transformed his life and that of many others,
becoming a clinical and social psychologist and Christian therapist, environ-
mentalist, researcher, and human rights activist in Central and East Africa in
the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I was born on October 21, 1983, in the city of Bukavu in the Kadutu com-
mune, quartier Nyamugo BCB, in the South Kivu province of Zaire, now
known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). I come from a family
overflowing with mixed ethnicities:

- My father is from the Bahavu ethnic group, some of whom live in the territories of Kabare and Kalehe, and many of whom live on the island of Ijwi in Lake Kivu—one of the African Great Lakes—which lies on the border between Rwanda and the DRC (South Kivu province). The Bahavu are considered to belong to the Bashi ethnic group, which is a mixture of Tutsi, Hutu from Rwanda, and Bashi from the Bushi kingdom of the South Kivu province in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Bashis' livelihood is primarily fishing, livestock, and traditional farming.
- My father's mother was a mixture of Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus, and my father's father came from the Bahavu.
- My mother was of mixed Rwandan lineage, from the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups of southwestern Rwanda.

Because of this complex mix of ethnicity that I inherited, I was marginalized everywhere I lived and suffered greatly from an ongoing identity crisis: in Rwanda, I was considered Zairean; in Burundi I was considered both Rwandan and Congolese; and now in the DRC many consider me Rwandan.

My father also fell victim to marginalization. Since both he and my mother were of mixed ethnic heritage, my father was automatically labeled as non-Zairean under the Mobutu Kingdom. After President Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, each successive ruler—Laurent Desire Kabila (1997), Joseph Kabila (2001), and Felix Tshisekedi (2018)—continued to pursue my family members. This marginalization led my father to encourage me to respond to ethnic conflicts with violence.

Rwandan immigration to the area of the Eastern DRC has taken place for centuries. During the twentieth century, a complex series of conflicts broke out between Hutus and Tutsis. In 1959, extremist Hutus sought to exterminate Tutsis in Rwanda in an effort to gather all Rwandan power into their own hands; Tutsis became victims of massacre and pillage of their cows and their land, forcing those who could do so to leave the country and seek refuge in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda. In 1973, General Major Juvenal Habyarimana took power in Rwanda. As president, he began colluding with Zairean President Mobutu, integrating spying into Zairean institutions and demonizing and diffusing negative ideology against Tutsis. This spying resulted in the mistreatment of not only Rwandan Tutsi refugees but also Zairean citizens of Rwandan origin, including my family.

After the sovereign conference of 1991 to chart Congo's political future, all Zairian speakers of Kinyarwanda—an official language of Rwanda—were automatically considered foreigners on Zairean territory. Everywhere, Zaireans of Rwandan origin came under every kind of persecution.

That same year, my father called me and said,

> My son, I want to give you an educational legacy as your guide in life. As
> you know, we are hated by our neighbors and the local authorities; they have
> accused us of being the sworn enemy of the Bantu peoples and of Zaire. I
> want to leave you a memorable legacy. My son, behold your dear brothers and
> sisters. War will be coming here to Zaire and Rwanda, and even to Burundi. I
> say this because of my own observations as well as the news that I am hearing
> day and night from the German radio spreading throughout Eastern Zaire.
> As a sign of power and victory, take this spear given from my father and his
> father; you will use it as a symbol of victory against our enemies. Learn to use
> this weapon to defend your brothers and sisters, without forgetting to defend
> our prominent ethnic group where they are around the world."

When my father shared these words with me, I was only eight years old—far
too young to understand what he was saying.

That same year, my father died. The following year, in 1992, my mother
died. Both were victims of poisoning. We suspect our neighbors killed them.
They hated our family because of our mixed ethnicity; they considered anyone
with ethnic ties to neighboring countries to be highly suspicious.

After the death of our parents, my siblings and I were forced to go live with
my grandmother in Rwanda. Upon our arrival in the country, we encountered
ethnic hatred exceeding that which we had left in Eastern Zaire. Despite the
deep hatred in Zaire, it was rare to see men there kill each other like we were
seeing in Rwanda in 1993.

At that time, Rwanda was involved in an intense multiparty scuffle, and
people were killing each other because of political differences as well as ethnic
conflict. The country was under pressure primarily from Tutsi rebels led by
Major General Paul Kagame against the regime of dictator (Hutu) President
Major General Juvenal Habyarimana. Our mother's family suffered daily be-
cause of attacks day and night by the Tutsi Kagame rebels. At the same time,
Interahamwe, an extremist Hutu militia group founded by the Habyarimana
political party, was attacking my family, accusing them of collaborating with
the Kagame rebellion. My sister's husband and my aunt fell victim to ethnic
conspirators from the Hutu extremist Habyarimana party. Killings continued
in my mother's family until April 1994.

In 1994, tragedy struck Rwanda as the country suffered under a multitude
of monstrous crimes leading to Hutu massacres and Tutsi genocide. Neighbor
killed neighbor, husbands killed their wives, and wives killed their husbands.
Parents even killed their children if the child's physiognomy looked like the
opposite ethnic group of their father or mother.

Truly, Rwanda was under demoniac influence; the most heinous thing I
witnessed was extremist Hutus killing babies just for laughs! One day a Hutu
Interahamwe killed my aunt's child right in front of me. I can never forget the

image of the Interahamwe carving the child's heart out of his little body, then cutting it into small bites to eat and pronouncing that he had eaten the heart of a Tutsi to escape pursuit by the spirits of Tutsis! The experience left me severely traumatized.

I myself escaped being a victim of death as God protected me five different times from killers in the Rwandan Tutsi genocide. My knowledge of the Swahili language from Zaire was a crucial part of keeping me alive because I could understand what the Interahamwe neighborhood was saying; this knowledge preserved me from death when other members of my mother's family were being killed day and night.

During the tragic Tutsi killings, I was forced to wear girls' clothes in order to escape from the Interahamwe, who were murdering primarily boys and men. I had no choice but to flee from Rwanda back to Zaire before the Kagame rebels took Kigali. At eleven years old, I walked one hundred kilometers by foot to the Rwandan and South Kivu border of the DRC. Along the way, the Interahamwe militia grabbed me and pushed a spear into my right foot. During this period of intense suffering and crime in Rwanda, human corpses littered the landscape. The bodies, eaten by dogs and crows and then left to rot, filled the air with the stench of rotting flesh.

Despite the long, harrowing journey, I was finally able to break through the border. Exhausted, I stepped into Zaire. There, I was welcomed by agents of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), including MCC Congo representative Cathy Hodder and her family. Terry Sawatsky and Cathy, MCC Zaire (DRC) representatives from Canada, led me directly to an orphanage belonging to what was then the Communauté des Eglises Baptistes (CBK) au Kivu under bishop Bubaka. It is now a community church called Communauté des Eglises Baptiste au Centre d'Afrique (CEBCA). In 1994, MCC was supporting the orphanage at the same time that they were supporting Hutu Christian refugee camps in Shabarabe and other refugee camps from 1994 to 1996. Before July 1994, there had only been Tutsi children who had survived Rwandan Tutsi genocide.

The MCC Canada and MCC U.S. representatives began their welcome by talking about tolerance and love toward our enemies. The process of reconciliation they described felt like a personal insult to me, given my experience as a victim of clashing political parties and politics based on regional and ethnic strategies from the extremist government in power at that time. In particular, I could not fathom forgiving one who had killed one of my relatives and eaten his flesh! The very thought of such forgiveness felt satanic to me.

But the MCC representatives never tired of talking to us about tolerance, forgiveness, and nonviolence. After I had been in the orphanage for some months, they began bringing Hutu orphans to join the Tutsi children in finding refuge on Zairean soil. The Hutu orphans were children whose parents had been killed by Tutsi soldiers during the liberation war led by the Rwanda

Defence Force. Children trying to live together with such clashing ethnic understandings gave rise to great distrust between the different groups. We sorely needed the MCC workers' charge to us to live in harmony.

In the orphanage, I hated my dear orphaned Hutu brothers and sisters because of what the Hutus had just done to the Tutsis in Rwanda. Given the ethnic tensions between us, it was difficult to live together, to eat at the same table. An MCC representative from Canada who observed the tension and conflict between us began a practice with us of prayer and playing/singing songs of love, tolerance, and forgiveness. But first, four times each day, they distributed candy to us with instructions to put each piece into the mouth of a fellow orphan to renew relationships by building love and tolerance between us. After four months of this, I began walking the road that would lead me to surpass hatred and live a life of tolerance.

In 1995, the MCC Canada staff ended their mission at the orphanage and were replaced by a couple named Fidèle Lumeya from Kinshasa and Krista Rigalo from the United States. Upon their arrival in South Kivu, they took care of us as the previous Mennonite staff had. By that time, several Tutsi orphans had returned to Rwanda, leaving only a few Tutsi children and the rest Hutu. The new staff reinforced the teachings of peace, tolerance, and nonviolence accompanied by prayer.

In addition to their humanitarian mission, the new couple decided to carry the spirit of their mission even further by planting the first Mennonite church in Eastern Zaire. They took the first step by forming a church choir with us orphans. In the new church, Fidèle and Krista continued to form our lives by teaching us about tolerance, nonviolence, peace, and peaceful conflict transformation.

A few months later, Zaire was attacked by a coalition of Tutsi armies from Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Eastern Zaire under political pressure from Major General Paul Kagame and the military led by Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The coalition military group targeted our orphanage. Group members included some Rwandan military members who had attacked Zaire, and also some Tutsi youth who had lived in our orphanage and knew that young Hutu orphans lived there. Twenty orphan children were killed by our old Tutsi refugee comrade orphans. Many more orphans were kidnapped along the way as they fled to the equatorial forest. Many Hutu refugees lost their lives in the forest, killed by military coalitions or sickness.

Forced into hiding, I went to Bukavu, my birthplace, where I was greeted by more atrocities of war. On the way to my family's house, I passed the bodies of ten of my family members. They had been killed by Interahamwe Hutu refugees who accused them of being spies of Rwandan Tutsis on Zairean territory.

Traumatized by the carnage, I fled to my uncle's house. As I arrived there, at the edge of his house I spotted five Tutsi Rwandan military members who had

just killed my uncle. Then I saw them rape his wife and daughters before killing all of them too. I was cursed to witness all these actions done by the military members as I hid in a traditional outdoor toilet.

I didn't know where to go, but fear told me to flee! I was forced to travel more than one thousand kilometers from Bukavu to Kisangani under cover of the rainforest, with Zairean refugees from South Kivu and North Kivu, Hutu Rwandans, and Burundian Hutu refugees.

At that time, the Rwandan militaries and their coalitions of friends were hunting down Rwandan Hutu refugees anywhere they could find them, ripping their bodies apart with bombs and killing them with other cruel methods. Internal refugees from different Zairian ethnic groups who had gone to seek refuge in the west of the country were also being killed. Adults and children alike were murdered indiscriminately in the Zairean forest. During this period of extreme human tragedy, people were dying in droves like insects, destroyed by bombs or ravaged by diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, malaria, and intestinal disorders. Famine and malnutrition took the lives of the rest. Hutu corpses were scattered in the equatorial forest, like the Tutsi victims of the 1994 genocide who had been killed by Hutu extremists (Interahamwe) and Major General Juvenal Habyarimana's army.

I lived like an animal in the forest, alone without any family members. I survived by eating crabs pulled from the rivers and the raw meat of mice, monkeys, and snakes. I even ate uncooked trees and tree roots! The thick vegetation of the forest canopy threw shadows everywhere that choked out the light, and the rain fell on me mercilessly day and night. It was an inhuman life.

I couldn't find safety in any shelters—whether for Rwandan Hutu refugees, Burundian Hutu refugees, or the Tutsi Rwandan military—because each group believed I was spying against them. So I lived as a refugee in the equatorial forest in the DRC for two years and six months. God protected me from being killed there on more than twenty-three occasions.

Finally, the miraculous hand of God led me out of the forest, back to the city of Bukavu, where I was welcomed by the Mennonite church and MCC. By God's grace, our brothers and sisters of the church under Pastor Beghela Philemo and Pastor Mbuyi Charles Kabinda from L'Eglise Mennonite du Grand Lac and Mennonite Central Committee accompanied me through trauma counseling and provided crucial support in other ways. Their efforts set me on the difficult road to finding normality as a human being.

In Bukavu, I had to remain in the church because the town was controlled by Tutsi Banyamulenge from the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (Minembwe), Tutsi Rwandan militaries, and Tutsi Burundian militaries. When these groups were in town, their mission was to arrest and kill anyone they suspected to have any mixed ethnic heritage or relationship with Rwandan Hutus or Burundian Hutus. My multiethnic background—Rwandan Hutu, Rwan-

dan Tutsi, and Havu from the DRC—made me a vulnerable target, so I rarely ventured beyond the church building.

It was now the year 2000, and I had already been the victim of Maï-Maï rebels (the local Congolese military rebels) and Hutu Rwandan rebel groups, who wanted to kill me because someone involved in ethnic conflict was accusing me of taking a neutral position in Congolese conflicts caused by Tutsis from Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda in the DRC. They also accused me of helping Tutsis establish the Hima Empire in the African Great Lakes region. These situations led one of our oldest neighbors to call the rebels to come kill me.

By 2001, I remained in danger of losing my life and had no choice but to return to Rwanda. I entered the country under the auspices of Rwanda-Burundi-MCC, aided by personal assistance from an MCC volunteer in Rwanda. This volunteer helped me enroll in school and supported my studies for six years in Rwanda until I received my secondary school degree in the human sciences.

Taking me under her wing and treating me as her own child, the MCC volunteer helped me fit in despite cultural differences related to the history of Rwanda, Congo, and the region in general. She covered tuition and room and board, and gave the best parental advice to help me receive a sustainable education for nonviolence, tolerance, peace, and peaceful conflict transformation within our communities.

These Anabaptist Mennonite teachings led me to the idea of establishing peace clubs and working at healing trauma in secondary schools in Northern Rwanda, where I encouraged my colleagues to take up a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, forgiveness, and peaceful resolution of conflict. During our dialogues about these issues, some of my friends were traumatized by bringing their tragic experiences from Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC out of the shadows. Talking out loud about such painful topics of conflict and tolerance was frowned upon, but I felt that leading these conversations was the best way to help the greatest number of people—especially young colleagues my age who desperately needed to break out of the criminal behavior stemming from ethnic conflict and marginalization in Rwandan society. Horrendous criminal acts against Rwandans in Rwanda and Zaire had deeply traumatized them. The pain of these brothers and sisters drove me to introduce a psychotherapeutic assistance group for them. With God's strength, many of them have changed their lives around.

After receiving my high school certificate in human sciences, I attended university at Institut d'Enséignment Supérieur de Ruhengeri in Musanze, Rwanda, where I studied governance for years, again through the support of the MCC volunteer. While there, however, I discovered the failure of African administrators and leaders to provide ethical and responsible leadership to help people in suffering situations. Disenchanted with that field of study, I abandoned it for one that I felt could offer more hope.

In 2008, I enrolled in Hope Africa University in Burundi. The MCC volunteer continued supporting my studies for an additional two years. After those two years, I received additional support that enabled me to complete my bachelor's degree in clinical and social psychology.

In Burundi, I once again became a victim of marginalization. Burundi, Rwanda, and the DRC were colonized by Belgium, and the people of these countries were suffering from ethnic conflict, marginalization, massacres, genocide, sexual violence, and more. At the university, some Tutsi Rwandan, Burundian, and Congolese Banyamulenge colleagues formed a coalition to separate themselves from the Hutus. Likewise, Hutus from Rwanda and Burundi as well as from North Kivu formed a coalition against the Tutsi coalitions of those countries.

Having positioned myself as a supporter and facilitator of peace, nonviolence, pacifism, and reconciliation, I felt obliged to take a neutral stance between these two ethnic groups when conflicts erupted around the campus. One way I practiced this was by moving toward the academic communities on campus that were not involved in ethnic conflict and hatred, such as students from Uganda, Kenya, Haiti, Cameroon, Tanzania, and non-Banyamulenge Congolese Tutsis.

My nonviolent behavior was foreign to the students; it was the opposite of how they handled their differences. Because of this, the Tutsi and Hutu groups both accused me of being a traitor: the Tutsis claimed I was a member of a rebel military group spying on them, and the Hutu group claimed I was part of the Kagame government spying in Burundi. This prompted one of the college students to ask the chancellor of the university to expel me from the school. Some of the Hutu Rwandans were militia group members of the FNL (Forces nationales de libération)—the Burundian extremist opposition party—and some extremist Hutu young Imbonerakure were from the CNDD-FDD (the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de défense et de la démocratie) party.

It is only by the grace of God that I am still alive. Both groups attempted to demonize me in the eyes of non-Burundian and non-Rwandan colleagues in an attempt to isolate me on campus. The situation so traumatized me that I almost lost my faith and my neutral position in the midst of the conflicts. At my lowest points, I wanted to take the path of radicalization against my perpetrators, who were interfering with my studies and my life.

Overwhelmed by the situation, I finally turned to the embassies of both the DRC and Rwanda to seek protection. At the Rwandan embassy, the ambassador expressed fear for my life, believing I was in grave danger of being kidnapped and killed as other Tutsi Rwandan students had been by Interahamwe and Imbonerakure ideologists. I learned that ten Tutsi Rwandan students from others campuses had been killed during that same period by their known Hutu colleagues. The ambassador advised me to either leave the campus and return

to Rwanda or move far off campus and live in another district (commune) of Bujumbura.

Out of respect for the Rwandan ambassador, I decided to heed his advice and move about fifteen kilometers away from the university in Ngagara commune to a new home in Kanyosha commune. Daily I awoke at 5:00 a.m. to arrive at the university at 7:15 a.m. Then, after going all day without food or drink, I left the university at 5:30 p.m. to return home by foot. The effects of going without eating or drinking severely weakened my body, and I fell ill with tuberculosis for six months.

In the midst of my illness, I struggled greatly with my new beliefs in peace and nonresistance. *Why should I suffer because of Mennonite beliefs and teachings?* I asked myself. Finding no ready answer, I decided to take the position of revenge like other criminals.

But when I made this decision against my enemies, my heart could not find peace. I felt compelled to seek counsel with a mentor and ask for advice to overcome the stressful situations in my life. This mentor reminded me about the love of Jesus Christ for sinners. He told me that Jesus had come to save the world because He is love and His love makes the forgiveness of our sins possible. If you want to overcome all the problems that fill your life, he said, as a Christian think and live forgiveness. He also reminded me that Jesus Christ came into the world as light but the world instead regarded him as a shadow.

My mentor encouraged me to continue taking a neutral position in conflicts because in doing so I could be a light for all peoples who live by conflict—a light that would transform others into peacemakers. I accepted her counsel and recommitted to taking a position of neutrality in conflict situations.

Since then, little by little, people have been coming to ask me to forgive them for what they were planning to do against my position of neutrality in their conflicts. Some of them, after finishing their bachelor's degrees, were called to work for the Burundian government, others returned to Rwanda, and still others returned to the DRC. Now I can't go two weeks without being called by colleagues who formerly viewed me as an enemy but are now asking for my support to help them resolve conflicts in their jobs, their communities, and their families.

After completing my bachelor's degree in clinical and social psychology at Hope Africa University, I began studying in the DRC for my master's degree in environmental science. In 2014 and 2015, I researched plant and animal biodiversity in the park of Kahuzi Biega, within the territories of Kalehe and Kabare and in the forest of Itombwe, within the territory of Fizi in the province of South Kivu, which had been affected by the proliferation of internal and foreign rebel groups.

During this time, I became connected to Amani Yoke Grand Lac, a local human rights and peacemaker organization, and I began teaching young Hutus

from Rwanda and Maï-Maï about the importance of leaving the forest and stopping sexual violence against their Congolese mothers and sisters. I taught them to be advocates of peacemaking and to live with a spirit of tolerance and respect for human rights, especially the rights of Congolese women, who, in the DRC are considered a weapon of war. They are victims of sexual violence by Congolese rebels as well as outside rebel groups from neighboring countries who proliferated in the DRC.

I also taught the young people to bring a halt to other vagrancy issues and acts of killing. During this time, I was able to help seventy Congolese and Rwandan rebel youth transform their lives and leave the forest and the way of violence. Another seventeen Rwandan Hutu youth between the ages of twenty and twenty-five agreed to return and rebuild their country with other Rwandans. I helped them to be in contact with the UN peacekeepers' mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) before they transferred to Rwanda.

In 2016 and 2017, using the same process under the Amani Yoke Grand Lac program, fifty-three young Congolese rebels from different Maï-Maï groups and ethnic groups agreed to put their weapons down and leave the forest and violence to build a better Congo without war and violence!

Today, as a human rights activist and peacemaker in the DRC, I know that my life continues to be at risk as I encounter the dangers of dictatorship, anarchy, extrajudicial killings, and other human rights and natural resource abuses by the government and rebel groups. Yet I continue with my aspirations from Anabaptist Mennonite doctrine because the teachings on peace, tolerance, nonviolence, and peaceful transformation of conflict are helping me succeed in my mission among different forests, towns, and villages of the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

After our marriage, my wife—Cyuzuzo Twagirayezu Alice—and I were assigned to live as an Anabaptist Mennonite family modeling the way of peace in each community or ethnic group of the African Great Lakes region. Basing our lives on Mennonite Anabaptist doctrine, we established a marriage founded on peace, nonviolence, and conflict transformation teachings. Our desire is to transform our countries that are suffering with multiple conflicts, killings, violence, environmental degradation, and extreme poverty.

Anabaptist Mennonite doctrine inspired me to establish the Amani Yoke Grand Lac and Christian Research Center in Africa (CRCA) as a research and a local human rights organization focusing on "accelerated peacebuilding and eco-engagement" in the African Great Lakes region. We are developing our ideas around the teachings of peace, tolerance, nonviolence, trauma healing, and environmental revitalization while doing field research on nonviolence; climate change; conflict resolution based on natural resources, environmental degradation, and sustainability development; and other such issues in Africa.

Seeds of Mission

by David Rensberger

Isaiah 55:10–13; Romans 8:1–11; Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

In her memoir *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress*, Rhoda Janzen writes of her childhood terror of being called to mission on the Chaco, an arid basin in South America that was becoming a Mennonite mission field at the time.1 I had something of a similar experience as a Mennonite boy in rural Indiana in the 1950s. I wasn't exactly terrified, just convinced somehow that, because I couldn't imagine my shy self doing the great work that God had missionaries doing in Africa and Latin America, I was failing my Maker, failing to be the best a Christian could be.

I've long since recognized that I have other gifts from God, other callings equally as valid as foreign mission. Yet that feeling of discomfort around mission has been hard to shake, especially when combined with more abstract ideas about pluralism and proselytizing and cultural imperialism. But my years of teaching and researching the New Testament eventually showed me that mission has been essential to Christianity from its earliest days, beginning with Jesus himself. Whatever my feelings of discomfort, mission is something I need to explore. What must Christians do in order to carry out mission in ways that are consistent with the missions of Jesus and his apostles? And, in fact, is there something even prior to the doing of mission, some necessary prerequisite for the carrying out of authentic mission? I'm going to respond to these questions by starting somewhere fairly obvious, but my reason for starting where I do may prove to be less obvious.

"A sower went out to sow."2 The simple beginning of this parable in Matthew 13 reminds us of the relative simplicity of crop planting in the agriculture of Jesus's time and place. A sower would walk over an unplowed field scattering seed, and the seed would later be plowed into the earth. It's not surprising that birds and rocks and thorns would threaten such vulnerable seeds. To the unin-

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1. Rhoda Janzen, *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress: A Memoir of Going Home* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009), 49.

2. Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version.* The parable is also found in Mark 4 and Luke 8.

formed listener, an urbanite from Sepphoris or Tiberias, the whole operation might have appeared to be a waste of time and seed. And that seems essential to the main point Jesus was making—a point that his rural hearers would have recognized.

The parable of the sower is meant to justify Jesus's mission. For someone who wanted to be a prophet and a reformer (let alone a messiah), Jesus seemed to be wasting a lot of time—wandering around the country with his ragged band of followers; associating with people known to be impure, morally and otherwise; having no visible means of support other than donations from wealthy women detached from their homes and families (Lk 8:1–3). Was *this* the Reign of God? Well, yes, Jesus says with this parable. He may seem to be throwing the seed of the Kingdom around hither and yon, without much purpose or plan. But, he says, his mission will produce a harvest, and it will be astonishing. Considering that the usual yield for farmers of that era was tenfold—ten units harvested for every unit planted—even thirtyfold would be a miracle, and a hundredfold would beggar belief. And that's the point: as wildly aimless, even counterproductive, as Jesus's mission seemed to be, he counted on a harvest so grand it could only come from divine intervention. Jesus believed in divine intervention. Expected it. He had every confidence that God would bring forth a massive harvest from the seeming randomness of his mission.

At the end of the parable, Jesus simply says, "Let anyone with ears listen!"; but later we get the familiar interpretation, in which the seed is identified as "the word" and the various environments it falls into are assigned allegorical interpretations. Biblical scholars widely regard this interpretation as an add-on from some years after Jesus, a way of understanding the parable in the context of the *church's* mission. Why do conversions sometimes fail to last? In the interpretation, failure to persevere in the Christian way results from persecution or from worldly cares and materialism. These terms have strong resonances in Anabaptist history, where believers have tended to define themselves in terms of endurance under persecution and avoidance of worldliness. The parable encourages trust in God for growth in mission despite unpromising conditions, and the interpretation speaks to possibilities of both success and failure once the mission has taken place. Both the parable and its interpretation concern not just individual spiritual life and growth (as we are often tempted to read them) but God's mission overall.

The imagery of seeds and planting was a favorite with Jesus. All of his seed parables speak of growth and coming to fruition, whether it is the seed that grows and ripens by an unknown process, or the good seed contaminated with weeds, or the mustard seed that produces growth out of all proportion to its size (Mt 13:24–32; Mk 4:26–31). The church has not been wrong to apply these parables to its mission and growth (though there are more and less authentic ways of doing so), since they embody Jesus's understanding of his own mission. He

brought a message from God and gathered a community that put that message into practice. His parables interpret and defend this mission—both its setting among unexpected people and its unexpected results of repentance, forgiveness, mercy, and love. Jesus's mission is the context in which his parables first made sense. That is why they can provide guidance for our mission too.

What interests me most about these parables, though, is something they leave unspoken: a seed can only produce what it is itself. Wheat seeds make wheat, and weed seeds make weeds (Mt 13:24–30). The parable of the sower doesn't specify what kind of grain is sown, but whether falling onto rocky or thorny or productive soil, the seeds will become only the particular type of grain that they are.

If the seed is a symbol of the mission that Jesus was "sowing," then what is planted and grows up is his way of trust, love, gentleness, and mercy.[3] If we extend this unspoken assumption in applying the parable to mission in our time, then *our mission too can only reproduce what we are ourselves*. Only communities that embody God's trusting, loving, gentle, and merciful reign, both in intention and in practice, can give birth to new communities that reflect that reign. We can't share the good news if we don't look and act like good news ourselves. In other words, the foundational, first-and-foremost work of the church's mission is *being* the church.

In 2011, the leadership of Mennonite Church USA drafted a *Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan*, which was updated in 2014 after feedback from the 2013 delegate assembly.[4] The plan affirms that the church is to be not only a sign and a witness but also an instrument, a promise, and a foretaste of the Reign of God.[5] This Reign, made visible in Jesus, is understood as embodying the loving purposes of God, and the believing community is understood as being "formed *by* and *for* the Kingdom."[6] This idea of being formed *by* the Kingdom or the Reign of God is much truer to the teaching of Jesus, I think, than the classic twentieth-century liberal ideal of "building the Kingdom." We do not build the Reign of God; God's Reign builds us. But it does build us, and the church exists as a new kind of humanity, committed as our "first and highest priority," in the words of the *Missional Vision*, "to fashion and mold our lives after that of Jesus Christ."[7]

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3. See Matthew 5:5, 7, 43–48; 7:12; 8:13; 9:10–13, 28–29; 11:29; 16:12–15; 17:20; 18:1–4, 21–35; 21:21–22; 22:34–40; 23:23.

4. *A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan for Mennonite Church USA*, February 25, 2014, 7–20, http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/our-purposeful-plan/.

5. *A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan*, 88–89, 106–8, 150–52, 165–66, 174–75.

6. *A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan*, 81–89; emphasis in original.

7. *A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan*, 155–56.

We are to be the human race that God has desired from the first, remade in the image of God by taking on the image of Jesus, the One who is God's image from all eternity (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). Only when the church is this sign and foretaste of God's Reign, shaped in the pattern of Jesus, can the work of reproducing its way of existence begin. Mission begins in *being* (which means *acting as*) the alternative community converted to the vision of God's purposes that Jesus embodied, expressed in his teaching, life, death, and resurrection and passed on to his disciples.

This tells us something about the relationship between discipleship and mission. Sometimes these are portrayed as alternatives; more often, discipleship is seen as the consequence of mission. But discipleship is also the *prerequisite* for mission. In the Great Commission, the disciples, who have been taught and formed by Jesus as they accompanied him, are commanded by the risen Lord to "go . . . and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). Only those who have become disciples can make new disciples, and then those disciples go on to make other disciples. That is the pattern of New Testament mission.

God intends to create a new humanity, reconciled and living with one another and with all creation in peace and in love; and if God intends it, then it will happen. "My word . . . shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose" (Is 55:11). As rain and snow enable the sower's seed to sprout and bear fruit (v. 10), so God *will* bring forth this new people. But how can we live in that ultimate future now? The world is still marked by sin, we are still marked by sin, and five minutes with the current news makes the prospect of a renewed human race seem impossibly remote. Can ordinary human beings really be a foretaste of the Reign of God, really embody God's own purposes, God's new creation, here and now?

The Yes to this question is one of the great themes of Paul's letters (at least as Anabaptists read them). In Romans 8, for instance, he says: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death": the goal of Christ's incarnation was "that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (vv. 2, 4). God enables us to do what our unaided powers could never accomplish. Already, now we can turn aside from "the flesh" (the standard, self-centered way of life in which our wants rank above everyone else's needs) so that God's will can be carried out, even in us. The new creation, our ultimate restoration to God's original design for us as creatures in the image of God, is already happening among those who are "in Christ": "everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:16–17). We are being transformed by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, away from conformity to societies alienated from God's designs, toward God's will of love (Rom 12:2, 9–21; 13:8–10). Paul's mission was to expand this new human creation far and wide. By first *being* the new humanity—opening themselves to "God who is at work in [them], enabling [them] both to will and

to work" for what God desires—his transformed communities could then continue the mission of reproducing themselves, even in Paul's absence (Phil 2:13).

A missional church must *be* the church, be this transformed and transforming community of human beings who boldly claim to live according to the Spirit and not the flesh. This means that every disciple is part of the mission, whether they are called "into the field" or not. There is a rhythm, or cycle, of being and doing, discipleship and mission. Being is first: we can only reproduce what we are. We must examine our own reality in the light of Jesus's teaching and example, making sure that we are indeed God's new humanity in Christ—before we offer our spiritual condition to others.

We don't have to be perfect; the apostles certainly weren't. But we need to open ourselves to transformation away from conformity to our own societies' fleshly mindsets before we can invite others to nonconformity in their contexts. Those who have set themselves to become and to be God's new kind of people, open to God's transforming Spirit, are in a position to do the work of mission—and do it they must, guided by that same Spirit. The new communities raised up through them by the Spirit, becoming the new people themselves, continue the cycle in their own missions.

The mission of doing, of speaking and helping and sharing, begins in a mission of being. A reconciled, loving, caring, forgiving, peace-making, justice-doing church is the seed of a new humanity, the beginning of a brand-new garden. With God as our gardener, the living Christ our soil, and God's Spirit our rain, breeze, and sun, we are the seeds of mission.

Book Reviews

David A. Hollinger, *When This Mask of Flesh Is Broken: The Story of an American Protestant Faith*, Outskirts Press, Denver, CO, 2019. 89 pp. $12.95. ISBN 9781977211149.

The distinguished American intellectual and religious historian David Hollinger describes his family memoir *When This Mask of Flesh Is Broken* as "American gothic." It's an apt expression. The story told in this short volume is one of bleak, frigid, subsistence farming on the barren Saskatchewan prairie; mental illness and its generational effects; sectarian Christianity; patriarchal power; and the bonds of persistence and reliance forged in this harsh and unforgiving setting. It's both a somewhat disturbing and powerful story, and it is also a story worth reflecting on by those who care about Anabaptism and mission.

The story Hollinger tells is that of his father, Albert Hollinger Jr. (referred to as Junior throughout the text), his father's siblings, and his father's parents, Albert Hollinger Sr. and Annie Deardorff Hollinger. The elder Albert Hollinger was a prosperous farmer and Church of the Brethren minister from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in the early twentieth century when he accepted a call, in 1921, to serve as pastor of a small, upstart congregation on the Saskatchewan prairie. Accepting the call was, according to Hollinger, relatively easy for the elder Albert but not nearly as seamless for his family.

In Gettysburg, the family—which included the elder Albert's wife, their seven children, and their live-in housekeeper and aunt—had been somewhat cosmopolitan and upwardly mobile, with access to education, cultural and social connections in the wider community, and stable religious networks. In Saskatchewan, they faced nearly impossible farming conditions, reliance upon faraway Winnipeg bankers for loans, and relative social isolation in the sparsely populated region.

Other traumas also shaped what Hollinger terms the family's "Canadian sojourn" (55). Their religious community in Canada was more fundamentalist than in Gettysburg, and the children, in particular, were disturbed by the visiting "hell-fire revivalists" and their emphasis on sin and damnation (33). Even more traumatic were the effects of mental illness upon the family. First was Annie Hollinger's undiagnosed mental illness, which rendered the family matriarch catatonic from 1914 until her death in 1927. During that period, her leg was amputated after she contracted gangrene from an infected toe but was unable to disclose her discomfort to anyone. Eldest son Archie's similarly undiagnosed "serious emotional problems" (31) resulted in his involuntary institutionalization in 1922 and his untimely death in 1946 at age 52.

In Hollinger's telling, the elder Albert remained relatively aloof from the day-to-day struggles of his children in this unforgiving environment, concentrated as he was on his religious duties and his increasingly prominent position within the national Brethren community. Meanwhile, the younger Albert and his siblings experienced relocation, isolation, and parental absence in visceral ways that fundamentally altered their life journeys, even after the patriarch's sudden death in 1932 and the family's return to the United States, and the sale of the Saskatchewan property after 1941.

One legacy was familial: only a few of the seven siblings married, and only two had children. The siblings worried both about the hereditary inheritance of mental illness and about perpetuating the poor parenting that had been modeled for them by their father. As one of Hollinger's uncles put it: "We were always afraid" (32). A second legacy was communal. Even after the end of the Canadian sojourn, the siblings were bonded together, their lives intertwined. Junior and his wife, Evelyn Steinmeier, opened their homes at different times and in different places to several of Junior's siblings. All of the siblings relied on one another for advice, counsel, and financial and emotional support. In their later years of life, five of the siblings—Junior, Charles, Roland, Annie, and Edith—lived in geographic proximity to each other in La Verne, a Church of the Brethren stronghold nestled in the foothills of Southern California's San Gabriel Mountains. The bonds of reliance and persistence, forged in the harsh conditions of the Saskatchewan prairie, held the siblings together for the rest of their lives.

Hollinger's purpose in *When This Mask of Flesh is Broken* is not primarily one of reflection on mission. But for readers engaged in cross-cultural service and other forms of ministry, Hollinger's family memoir raises issues that warrant serious consideration. In the main, the book offers a potent reminder of the human and familial costs of following a perceived call to Christian service. As Hollinger represents the situation, Albert Sr. was emotionally unavailable to his children during the Canadian sojourn, preoccupied by his religious vocation and by the relentless work required to eke out modest crop yields in the barren environment. We know, of course, that the elder Albert was not unique in this regard; the annals of Mennonite, Brethren in Christ, and Church of the Brethren history are filled with stories of men who prioritized a perceived divine call over the care of their families, or whose religious work placed undue burden on wives, children, and extended family.

In addition, the book shows how Christian mission was often intertwined with manifest destiny. Hollinger repeatedly points out that Anabaptists who settled on the Saskatchewan prairie, including his grandfather, believed in "the great myth of 'Virgin Land'" and mixed capitalist pursuits—the acquisition of land suitable for farming, for example—with their religious mission (12, 15).

Both of these realities deserve serious reflection by those who care about both Anabaptism and mission, and Hollinger's book illustrates them in vivid terms.

There are some factual errors in Hollinger's account, mostly revolving around his grandfather's pastorate in Saskatchewan. Hollinger indicates that Albert Sr. relocated his family to Canada at the invitation of a group of Brethren in Christ—a denomination that was shaped, like the Church of the Brethren, by Anabaptist and Pietist influences—who were looking for a new minister. According to Hollinger, they had split from another group of Brethren in Christ over that latter contingent's "turn toward Pentecostalism" (14). However, according to historian E. Morris Sider, who has written the definitive history of the Brethren in Christ in Canada, the split among Saskatchewan Brethren in Christ was precipitated not by disagreements about Pentecostalism but by disagreements over whether sanctification is a lifelong process (the traditional stance among Anabaptist-oriented groups) or an event, a "second work of grace" similar to justification (the stance taken by many groups in the American holiness tradition). The group that invited Albert Sr. to serve as their minister were the traditionalists, and they believed themselves to be the true Brethren in Christ, even though they had pulled out of the established Brethren in Christ congregation. Hollinger presents these dissidents as forming a "'fusion' congregation" (15), an equal-parts mix of Brethren in Christ and Church of the Brethren, but Sider presents the dissidents as having "joined the Church of the Brethren," not blending church traditions.[1] Moreover, Hollinger claims that the Brethren in Christ Church named Albert Sr. "bishop of Western Canada" (23–24), but I could find no evidence in the minutes of the General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church (the denomination's highest governing body) that he ever held that title officially. Perhaps the Brethren in Christ dissidents bestowed the title on Albert Sr., without official authority, as a sign of their gratitude for his leadership, but there's no record of Hollinger's grandfather receiving that honorific through the church hierarchy.

But these are minor factual and interpretive issues in an otherwise valuable story. Hollinger's memoir is not intended as a missiological text, but it is nonetheless worthwhile reading for those who care about Anabaptism and mission.

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1 Sider's version of this story appears in *Be in Christ: A Canadian Church Engages Heritage and Change* (Oakville, ON: Be in Christ Church of Canada, 2019), 222–27. Quotation from p. 226. The Brethren in Christ in Canada changed their denominational name to "Be in Christ" in 2017.

Charles E. Moore and Timothy Keiderling, eds., *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship*, Plough, Walden, NY, 2016. 226 pp. $14.00. ISBN 978-0874867046.

What does it cost to follow Jesus? Mark, the earliest Gospel writer, explored this question in his first story of Jesus calling disciples. Mark tells us that Simon Peter "left [his] nets and followed" Jesus (Mk 1:18), but there's more to it than simply leaving a fishing business behind. At his core, Simon Peter was a fisherman. In a sense, leaving his nets to become a disciple cost Simon Peter everything. A few verses later, John, one of the "Sons of Zebedee," leaves Zebedee behind to follow Jesus. For a relational person like John, the evangelist who talks so deeply about Christian love, leaving Zebedee in the boat costs him everything. That's always the metaphorical cost of being Jesus's disciples—it costs everything.

From the very beginning, the Christian community has discerned a need for stories of costly discipleship and examples of people who traded everything to follow Jesus. Jesus himself encourages an awareness of the cost of discipleship (Mt 13:44; Mk 8:34; Lk 14:25–33). The earliest Christians recognized that stories of costly discipleship help maintain identity, values, and ecclesial trajectory. They developed ascetical movements and circulated numerous martyr stories, describing the various ways God's people paid the ultimate cost for following Jesus.

In the Anabaptist tradition, our collections of martyr stories are primarily found in the *Martyrs Mirror*, compiled by Dutch Mennonite elder Thieleman J. van Braght, first published in 1660. Van Braght hoped to reawaken complacent and comfortable Anabaptists to the costs of following Jesus. The *Martyrs Mirror* quickly became an indispensable part of Anabaptist identity and education, but its stories conclude in 1660, leaving an ever-widening gap in the accounts of ongoing costly discipleship. *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship* seeks to address part of that gap by recording stories of costly discipleship that span the globe and the centuries.

Bearing Witness, produced by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism's Bearing Witness Project at Goshen College, adds to the legacy of the *Martyrs Mirror* in more ways than one. Not only does it contribute stories after the 1660s, it also expands global representation beyond European and early Christian localities. Its thirty-six stories recount the experiences of Christians who—like those in the *Martyrs Mirror*—are (presumably) committed to believers baptism and nonviolence as they embody faithfulness to Christ despite suffering persecution and (often) death. The stories range from Stephen, the earliest Christian Martyr (of Acts 7), to the recent persecutions of the *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria*, a Church of the Brethren community currently suffering persecution at the hands of the Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Every story recounts the faithfulness of Christians who recognize that following Christ is worth it, even though it costs everything. The short stories fit nicely into more than a month's worth of daily reflection, meditation, or devotional reading. A few minutes a day of immersion into the experiences of our global sisters and brothers provides a wealth of impact. In the words of John D. Roth and Elizabeth Miller's introduction, "Rightly remembered, these stories can challenge Christians everywhere to a deeper understanding of discipleship, to closer relationships with congregations experiencing persecution today, and to greater courage in their own public witness" (xvi).

Bearing Witness also reveals a few additional needs for our North American Anabaptist experience. It's not strictly a supplementary update to the *Martyrs Mirror*, which is good since *Bearing Witness* has a slightly broader goal in mind (and it repeats several stories already contained within the *Martyrs Mirror*). While Van Braght's goals might have been similar, recording the global experiences of Christians wasn't nearly as centralized as it is for the Bearing Witness project. Van Braght sought to persuade a specific contextual community toward specific values and actions—namely, how to follow Christ in seventeenth-century Europe.

Bearing Witness is a worthwhile contribution to several projects, and it also reminds us that Anabaptists living in the Global North would benefit from a compilation of costly discipleship stories in our contexts to awaken our own imaginations and follow Christ more faithfully. In its valuable pursuit of global stories, *Bearing Witness* leaves a gap for North Americans to add our stories as well (Clarence Jordan is the only US American story from the paast century). We, the Anabaptists in the Global North—especially those of us who reside in contexts of militarism, complacency, and institutionalized injustice—must add to the legacy of the *Martyrs Mirror* with our own stories and contextualized examples, as both a testimony and a blueprint for those who will come after us.

In the end, following Jesus is always costly, but it only costs one little thing—that's "all." Following Jesus just costs "all." It always costs us our whole life, whether we summarize it as "nets," family, professions, or our safety. Jesus doesn't even demand we "abandon" these things; we just have to hand over control to him. Peter went fishing again, and Zebedee's name reenters the story a few more times, but the point is always that Jesus now controls and leads the course of life. Sometimes faithfully following Jesus means paying the cost one day at a time, while occasionally it means paying the cost all at once . . . but it always costs the same. It always costs "all."

The beautiful thing about the fact that it only costs "all" is that anyone can afford it (even if it's harder for those of us who have a lot; see Mk 10:23–27). The contribution of *Bearing Witness* is nothing short of the reminder that a continuous string of Christian sisters and brothers have handed all they had—their very

lives—over to Jesus and they resolutely call to us from the other side to remind us that "following Jesus is worth it all."

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Lauren Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*, New Haven, NJ, 2018. 180 pp. $20.00. ISBN 978-0-300-21582-3.

Lauren Winner's new book is a powerful response to the recent turn toward practice in Christian reflection. *The Dangers of Christian Practice* is a slim, elegantly readable account of how Christian baptism, Eucharist, and prayer can carry with them harm along with healing. The author provides this account not to insist that Christian practice is intrinsically or uniquely harmful but as a way of chastening optimism that a more robust set of Christian practices will enable Christians to resist the evils of late capitalism more effectively.

Winner begins with sin and the damage it has wrought. Created things can be damaged, she writes, in "characteristic" or uncharacteristic ways. Characteristic damage tells us something about the kind of thing the damaged object is. It is characteristic of a book, for example, to become yellowed and for its binding to crack. A book might be thrown into a river, but this particular harm would not, in itself, tell us much about the kind of thing a book is. Or, the love of parents for their children is sometimes laced with the parents' own desire to turn their children into what they wish they themselves had become. This damage is characteristic; it tells us something of what nurturing love is. So too, Winner continues, with novels and sentimentality, shared meals and exclusivity, and friendship and the tendency to consume and feed off one another.

So too, also, with Eucharist, baptism, and prayer. In each of these three cases, Winner highlights historical case studies that reveal the damage that is characteristic of the respective sacrament—and, along the way, she shows us what the sacrament is really about. The Eucharist, she suggests, chiefly accomplishes "Gentile intimacy with Israel's God" (38). The good of the sacrament is to bring the Jewish flesh of Christ into association with the mostly Gentile church. Through a reading of Medieval host desecration narratives (in which accusations that Jews had stolen the sacrament were used to incite pogroms), Winner suggests that a characteristic damage of the Eucharist is a set of violent and destructive "attitudes toward and practices about living Jewish flesh," and perhaps, by extension, the need to purify and eliminate elements not seen as fit for this intimacy (35).

To discern the characteristic damage of prayer, Winner presents the diaries of slave mistresses in the antebellum American South, exposing their prayerful

desires for their slaves' submission. Here the damage Winner identifies as characteristic is the tendency of prayer to ratify and reify the evil desires of the one who prays (83). This damage tells us something of the good of prayer, which is friendship with the God who wishes us to desire good for ourselves.

In her final case study, Winner examines nineteenth-century American christening parties. Baptism, she suggests, "rightly operates in the cleft between extracting the baptizand from her locality and affirming that very locality" (150). In putting on Christ, the one who is baptized is both blessed in who they have been and born again into someone new. Baptism goes wrong, Winner suggests, by eliminating this tension in either direction. For most contemporary American audiences, she posits, the reification of the local and familial is the more common kind of damage. In the baptismal parties she examines, "the celebrating family stood around looking not at the sign of regeneration but at itself" (125).

In the final chapter of the book, Winner reflects on the nature of gifts and damage. In an appendix, she situates her work in terms of contemporary Christian theology, noting that for postliberals like Stanley Hauerwas and George Lindbeck, as well as a range of other scholars, including feminist theologians, "practices have been embraced as a way of fixing something in and for the church" (180). Baptism, Eucharist, and prayer are indeed perfect, as gifts from God, "but any gift given by a Giver like that to a recipient like us will be damaged" in the receiving (154). And so, while recent scholars have tended toward a "repristination" of practice, Winner performs a "depristination."

But Winner's book depristinates for the purposes of—if not repair of—endurance and constancy. In closing, she recommends repentance, confession, and lament as necessary to any practice. They too have their own deformations, but they can sometimes help us to receive the gifts of baptism, Eucharist, and prayer more carefully. We pray, we baptize, we celebrate the Lord's Supper, not because we can get them right, she states, but because we hope that in practicing them, "despite the damage, they will return us to one another, and to the Lord" (165).

When I set this book down, I began to think of the many damages proper to Anabaptist life and practice. My mind turned to the prose and poetry of Rudy Wiebe, Miriam Toews, and Julia Kasdorf—to the way that in each, the social regulation that comes with communal discipleship is exposed as suffocating, patriarchal, and authoritarian. My mind turned also to Gerald Schlabach's argument that in an age of mass consumption adult baptism threatens to fetishize individual choice over collective formation; to Steve Dintaman's charge that contemporary Anabaptism tends to reduce the Christian life into an ethical program; and to the way Anabaptist migration and evangelism has been woven from the threads of colonialism.

I thought of these things because it seemed important in this review to give some account of the damages Anabaptist practice has borne. But what Anabaptists ought to take from Winner's book is not, I think, a clear explanation of which of our own practices go wrong in which ways—though such self-investigation is necessary—so much as the more fundamental recognition that our practices do, in fact, go wrong beyond all attempts to repair and purify, and yet they remain indispensable. In other words, what Anabaptists might learn from this book is not a guide for diagnosing and repairing our own particular practices but rather a certain humility about the limits of getting our ecclesiology or missiology "right" at all. We might recognize instead that sometimes all we can do is receive the Lord's gifts with clumsy hands, knowing that we will break them.

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Joshua Dubler and Vincent W. Lloyd, *Break Every Yoke: Religion, Justice, and the Abolition of Prisons*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020. 264 pp. $35.00. ISBN: 978-0190949150.

I spent the past two years working regularly on a church harassment policy intended to address sexual harassment and abuse between congregational members. A large part of the process was familiarizing myself with existing abuse and harassment policies as well as paying more attention to the stories arising out of the #MeToo movement. Part of these conversations revolved around the sentencing of criminal forms of sexual abuse. As I tried to increase my understanding and support of survivors, it seemed natural to also add my support for increased convictions and prison sentences for those who abuse. I mention my experience because the project of prison abolition touches on a wide range of issues and experiences across the political spectrum that can make abolition easy to dismiss outright because of some sense of justice that we hold to.

In *Break Every Yoke*, Vincent Lloyd and Joshua Dubler give voice to the varied and diverse religious expressions that both gave shape to the modern prison and worked for its abolition. There has been no monopoly on how Americans have understood and practiced "justice." Prison abolition often emerges from basic principles that reject caging human beings and affirm the potential and value of each human. Tied to, but not fully equated with these convictions, is a deep understanding of the injustices present *within* the current justice system. That is, prison abolitionists will renounce current injustices but will also reject the philosophy that simple reform will render prisons beneficial or just for humanity. This is, however, to put the matter too reductively, and, even with a focus on the *religious* dimensions of prison and prison abolition, *Break Every*

Yoke is a reminder of the diverse groups and individuals opposing the prison system in part or in whole.

The book focuses primarily on the period from the 1960s to the present and gives substantial attention to the shift that occurred from the 1950s into the 1960s and then through the 1980s (the period of mass incarceration). The 1960s is singled out for its significance in representing a larger cultural shift that had a massive impact on the future of prisons in the United States. Given the religious history of the United States, it is not surprising that the prison system developed along theological lines, with early prison models speaking of *penitentiary* reform or providing theological justification for punishment. However, by the 1960s, many mainline Protestant groups rejected outright the role and function of the prison system. The problem was that mainline churches were losing their last cultural foothold in mainstream America and being replaced with the seemingly odd couple of secularism and evangelicalism that privileged the individual and the rights of the individual, namely in the form of private property as a right. This lent itself to "law and order" policing and criminalizing poverty.

So while prison reform and abolition voices emerged in the 1960s, dominant cultural values had ensured they would not gain traction. This shift found one culmination in Ronald Reagan, who enshrined in religious language the values of economic individualism whereby the state did not support the individual structurally and economically but rather enforced and defended the practices of the free market and the corporate interests within. This occurred through expanding both the military abroad and prisons, and policing domestically. While these changes initially gained approval from the political right wing in the 1980s, this law and order approach bled over into the center and left, where increased prison and punishment were taken up as the appropriate responses to things like hate crimes and violence against women. While some of the religious language still used by Reagan faded under Clinton, Bush, and Obama, prisons (as well military campaigns overseas) continued to be furnished with the moral language of individual freedom that needed to be defended by capturing and incapacitating those who are a threat to that freedom.

In the midst of the larger social movement toward mass incarceration, and many of the attendant religious connections, there remained religious ferment around prison abolition in the 60s and 70s, both within prisons and from the outside. A major portion of chapter 3 focuses on the work of Mennonites in this period. The authors outline a sustained push among Mennonite leaders and communities to name the injustice of the criminal system and to work actively for alternatives in what most would recognize broadly as *restorative justice*. For a period of time, these were not fringe parachurch concerns but were brought forward in denominational meetings and at Mennonite educational institutions, with Mennonite leaders also making inroads into other groups such as the International Conference on Penal Abolition. While viewing these groups

as offering tools for an abolitionist project, the authors note that most movements such as these eventually get appropriated into a reformist mode, if they have any impact at all.

Chapter 4 tracks moments of the abolitionist spirit inside prisons. Alongside the more familiar movements such as the rise of Black Muslims in prison, the authors explore lesser-known groups like Church of the New Song (CONS). CONS was a religion started in 1970 by prisoners led by a charismatic leader who wrote his own scripture and developed rituals. A key element of their organized expression, like Muslim groups in prison, was demanding rights under the First Amendment regarding the practice of religion. The question of First Amendment rights for these groups became the question of how much space the prison system allowed groups, CONS in particular, whose very agenda was in opposition to the prison system itself. What is interesting with CONS is how it forced the question of what constitutes religion. While CONS won early court victories, those victories were eventually overturned, and CONS, among other groups, was deemed *political* as opposed to religious and therefore not afforded protection.

By the turn of the millennium, many religious expressions were stripped of their political power and reduced to individual reform more in keeping with the overall logic of the prison system. Today, organized responses within the prison system tend to reflect particular injustices or cruelties rather than an overall abolitionist agenda. These groups may have religious connections, but many are not framed and structured as religious movements were in previous decades.

The concluding chapter gathers a vast array of current abolitionist forms. Many forms are coalition-based organizations in which religion may or may not play a part. In addition, any religious framing may or may not take traditional forms; it might reflect ad hoc syncretistic forms or take completely novel expressions such as mainline priests following the lead of LGBTQ atheists, leaders cobbling together forms of ancestral naturalism, activists converting to orthodox Christianity promoting the primitive communism of the Acts church. Whatever role religion may or may not have, there is little consistency or continuity with previous institutional or orthodox forms. Within these crucibles, foundational statements continue to be formed such as that coming from the Oakland Peace Centre, which states simply that "in their goodness, human beings deserve better than to be made to suffer" (204).

This chapter sprawls out like a shotgun blast aimed at the prison system, with image after image of the abolition spirit. Toward the end, the authors finally ask, "In aggregate, are the preceding examples religious or are they secular?" There is, of course, no way to adjudicate this question without doing some interpretive injustice along the way. But the authors also acknowledge that to simply leave "religion" too broad and encompassing is to make it empty and useless.

The hope in this scattershot is that one might sense the spark and powder of human freedom and justice animating these seemingly disparate forms and expressions. But does such a blast, without nuance or aim, dismiss and disable gains in prosecuting and binding the powerful who harm the vulnerable? And, more specifically to this book, does there remain any necessity for seeking out what is religious in all this?

The book began with a sense that one could not speak of abolition and justice in America without speaking of religion. This seems true at least in the sense that one can hardly speak about anything in America's past without speaking of religion. But the authors go further; they wager that "in pushing us to envision the impossible . . . a religious attitude is here an essential component of the abolitionist cause. For the abolitionist, justice cannot be reduced to worldly terms (not the terms of *this* world, anyway)" (17). This is a more suspect move, in my opinion. Although Christianity will be the primary source for my own engagements with and expressions of abolition, such religious commitments seem unnecessary in movements I have encountered and that are given witness within this book.

The underlying agenda of this book in promoting a sort of implied natural theology of justice seems somehow underhanded. Let simple statements like those coming from Oakland Peace Centre be enough, or even from one of the author's own concluding reflections stating that "principled commitment to a cause is one thing; the binds of intimacy are a different order of obligation" (236). Mennonites have ample principles from scripture and our peace tradition to engage abolition work. The question remains: will we forge intimacies with the vulnerable and suffering both outside and inside prison walls, affirming finally and fully that in their goodness human beings deserve better than to be made to suffer?

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Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, eds., *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*; University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2018. 369 pp. $32.62 CDN (paperback). ISBN 978-1-4875-2327-5.

This impressive volume is one of the most challenging and stimulating books I have read in recent memory. Its purpose and messages are urgently relevant to anyone who calls this land Turtle Island or Canada, eespecially in light of current conflicts over pipeline development in Indigenous territory. Though these conflicts have faded from headlines in the wake of a global pandemic, the issues that underlie them remain unresolved. I found the book especially useful and instructive in my role as a facilitator of Mennonite Church of Eastern

Canada's work on responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

There is a great deal to digest in this book, which includes chapters by many authors. Happily, I found it well laid out, easy to navigate, and written in exceptionally clear and beautiful language. It calls on readers to "envision the combination of robust resurgence *and* transformative reconciliation" (8, italics added). The authors successfully convey this integrative vision in ways that are both illuminating and inclusive. For instance, Borrows illuminates the limitations and blind spots of frames of reference that many of us take for granted. He asserts that "earth-based relationships reveal environment-based laws over which humans have little control. . . . They help humans see that they are not the jurisprudential center of the universe" (61). When humans realize this, we see that the "rule of law" exists within a much broader, deeper, and older frame of reference—the laws and relationships of earth-based systems. I find this insight constructively provocative in the context of recent discourse on upholding the "rule of law" in the current pipeline disputes. It raises important questions about *which laws* should be doing the ruling.

I appreciate the authors' ability to proffer powerful and timely messages in ways that are inclusive and engaging rather than alienating or off-putting. They do so by communicating on a broad spectrum of frequencies that can resonate across educational, sociocultural, and professional backgrounds. The book employs persuasive legal arguments, passionate calls for environmental justice, and prescient Indigenous teachings, sometimes all within the same chapter. The authors also frame reconciliation around the common link that all humans have with the earth, which sustains us. This quote captures the essence of this vital message: "If we try to reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with each other without reconciling our way of life with the living earth, we will fail, because the unsustainable, crisis-ridden relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that we are trying to reconcile has its deepest roots in the unsustainable and crisis-ridden relationship between human beings and the living earth" (84).

The inclusive approach and tone is not warm and fuzzy; it has a sharp edge of implication. Reconciliation involves a reckoning with historical injustice and a recognition of responsibilities moving forward. The message for Settlers and especially Settler governments is direct: *Canada is built on treaties*. Asch (a Settler himself) asserts that "one cannot have Confederation until there is a home on which to build it, and without the treaties we have no home here" (42). The authors make the clear connection between reconciliation and power, calling on Settlers to "suspend power-over relations and engage in dialogue and negotiation as equals." The "assertion of power-over," they argue, "renders reconciliation impossible" (21).

In addition to its important insights on reconciliation, the book paints a captivating and vibrant picture of resurgent Indigenous strength. This is very important to hear, especially since headlines still show a tendency to sensationalize deficiencies and defeats. Resurgence is also framed in inclusive terms: the need for resurgence is mutual. To heal relationships with the earth, upon which we all depend, Settler institutions require fundamental reform and renewal as well. The authors argue for "the resurgence of Canadian law, not just Indigenous law. Canadian law could do a much better job of reconciling us with the earth" (65). The most hopeful and challenging message of this book is that the power to foster resurgence and reconciliation does not rest solely in the hands of Supreme Court justices, Grand Chiefs, and cabinet ministers. That power is imbued in each one of us who belong to this land. Borrows and Tully contend that "we the democratic people and peoples of this land, can carry on discussing and enacting practices of reconciliation and/or resurgence in every area of Indigenous and Settler life ways and earth ways without waiting for the Crown to join in" (22).

In my view, this final quote constitutes a direct call to action to each reader to engage in the most important work of our generation—resurgence and reconciliation. While I confess to being nearly overwhelmed by the gravity of this compelling book, I encourage everyone to take on the fruitful and exciting challenge of reading it. I further challenge those who read it to engage with the call to action and to begin building networks of people who learn, build relationships, and mobilize for change.

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Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality*, Indigenous Relations, Port Coquitlam, BC, 2018. 200 pp. $19.75. ISBN: 978-0-9952-6652-0.

Bob Joseph's book *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act* took me back to 1972 when I volunteered with Native Enterprises in Winnipeg. There I was introduced to the racist, colonialist, and arbitrary nature of the Act that continues to undermine Indigenous rights and identity. I also witnessed expressions of Indigenous resistance in the rise of voices that no longer can be silenced. Joseph's book is an articulate expression of the evils of Canadian colonization and maps out a strategy for decolonization that is essential if reconciliation is to become a reality. The Christian settler community in particular, because of

its central role in the incorporation of the Doctrine of Discovery into Canadian law and the disastrous residential school policy, needs to decolonize itself and be an ally to the resurgence of Indigenous identities, cultures, rights, and self-determination.

Joseph documents the twenty-one most egregious sections of the Act that represent the Canadian government's determined efforts to snuff out Indigenous rights: "We should take immediate steps to extinguish Indian title," said Sir John A. Macdonald (25). The Act attempted to weaken Indigenous cultures and identity by banning Indigenous ceremonies, confining Indigenous peoples to reserves, and forcing Indigenous children into residential schools "to kill the Indian in the child" (53). The book documents that the legacy of the Indian Act continues to strain the health, social, and economic fabric of Indigenous communities but is unable to dampen the Indigenous struggle for dignity, self-identity, culture, and self-determination.

In the book's final chapters, Joseph outlines the framework for the elimination of the Indian Act by a recognition of the Indigenous "inherent right" to self-determination and self-government.

> While self-government is not a quick fix for the deeply rooted social, health and economic issues that plague Indigenous communities, it is a step towards empowering communities to rebuild and heal from the intergenerational effects of residential schools. (102)

21 Things is a call to action for the Christian church, summarized in recommendation #48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report: "We call upon the church parties to the Settlement Agreement, and all other faith groups and interfaith social justice groups in Canada who have not already done so, to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation."[2] As Anabaptist Christians, our faith calls us to respond with prayerful and informed actions of solidarity and reconciliation.

First, we need to embrace Anabaptist values of love, justice, truth, service, and reconciliation, which challenge the forces of injustice, racial prejudice, and privilege at the heart of the Canadian colonial project. Second, Anabaptists need to repent for conscious and unconscious complicity in Canada's oppression of Indigenous peoples, not out of guilt as much as a recognition that our spiritual health and the healing of Indigenous people are intertwined. Third, Anabaptists need to explore ways in which we can be effective allies by trusting and amplifying Indigenous voices that are often marginalized and ignored in Canadian public and political discourse; we engage in redemptive listening,

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2 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action," 2015, http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.

transformative learning, and direct advocacy as a determined and focused practice that is worthy of our identity as followers of the Christ.

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