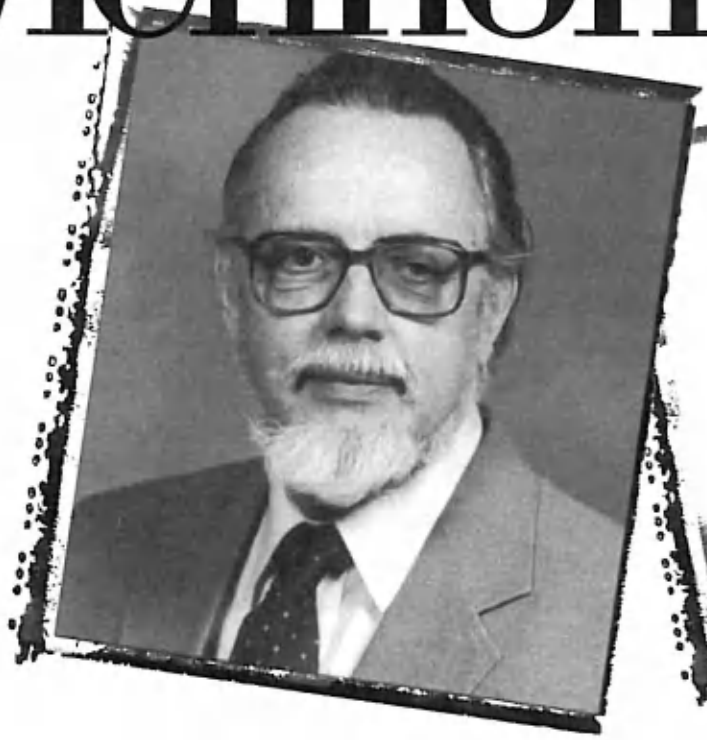
Mennonite Life



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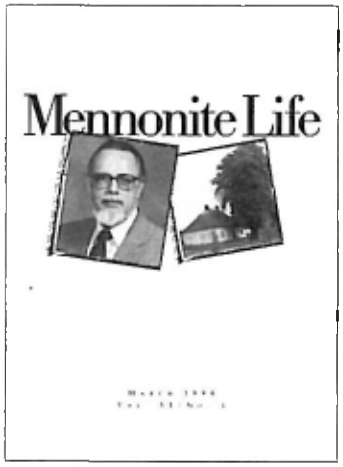
In *this* issue



In this issue our religion and theology section is highlighted. To mark the recent death of John Howard Yoder, we have a collection of brief commentaries by a variety of writers on "What I Learned from John Howard Yoder."

Our history section includes what was originally a presentation by Cornelius J. Dyck at the Kauffman Museum, North Newton, Kansas, on November 24, 1996, during the museum's exhibit "Menno Simons: Image, Art, and Identity."

Our current issues section consists of a commentary by John D. Roth about contemporary Mennonite life in Costa Rica. Roth is associate professor of history and director of the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College. He spent 1996-1997 in Costa Rica with Goshen's Study-Service Trimester program.

Our arts section includes a review essay by Ami Regier, assistant professor of English at Bethel College, on Jeff Gundy's recent book *A Community of Memory*. We also have three new poems by Naomi Reimer, reprinted with permission from her new book *The Taken* (Custer, WA: Birch Bay Books, 1997; ISBN 0-9659933-0-2).

As usual, we conclude with a few book reviews.

Photo credits:
p. 4, John-David Yoder and Paul Meyer Reimer; p. 15, 17, 18, 20, 21 Mennonite Library and Archives; p. 25, 26 John D. Roth from calendars of the Mennonite churches in Costa Rica.

Contents

Religion and Theology

What I Learned from John Howard Yoder 4

History

Some Hard Questions to Menno: How Might He Respond?
Cornelius J. Dyck 14

Current Issues

Mennonite Integration in Costa Rica
John D. Roth 24

Arts

The Dream of the Self as a "Community of Memory": Jeff Gundy and the Ancestral Voices
A Review Essay by Ami Regier 28

Poetry
Naomi Reimer 31

Book Reviews 33

What I Learned from John Howard Yoder

Lois Barrett, Commission on Home Ministries, General Conference Mennonite Church:

I first met John Howard Yoder at a Fellowship of Reconciliation conference in Colorado, where we began a several-year-long theological debate on divorce and remarriage. Neither of us ever convinced the other on that topic. But the topic of peace was another matter.

I had grown up in West Texas, uncritically patriotic and accepting of whatever the president of the United States did. But during my university years, at the beginning of the buildup of U.S. military forces in Vietnam, I became a pacifist. Not long after, I became a Mennonite, finding both a theology and a community to support a life of peacemaking. I began reading everything I could find on peace from a Christian point of view. One of those books was *The Politics of Jesus*. And some of the other authors I read (such as James Douglass) I discovered later were dependent on John's work, especially the essay "Peace Without Eschatology?"

Some years later, as a student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, I took John's classes on "Christian Attitudes Toward War, Peace, and Revolution" and "Christology and Theological Method." The most important thing I learned in those classes was not the subject matter itself, but a way of thinking theologically.

More than anyone else I have known, John had a knack for thinking outside the lines that had been drawn by the dominant culture. He was able not only to think about the answer to a question, but simultaneously whether it was the right question. By asking that question, what assumptions was the questioner making? Had the questioner forgotten some important aspect?

For those two classes, which he had taught many times, his lectures had been mimeographed. We were expected to read the lectures ahead of time and come to class prepared to discuss the topic of the day. What I really learned in class was a new way of thinking about theological questions.

More recently, I was part of an interdenominational project on missional ecclesiology through the Gospel and Our Culture Network. In one of the theological conversations we had scheduled in 1995, we had invited John as well as historical theologian Justo Gonzalez. John was really one of the few theologians who had thought about the nature of the church from a missional perspective. Most of the people in our group were Anglo mainline Protestants, and it became clear that the questions they were asking were from within the dominant culture, whereas both John and Justo, in different ways, represented traditions outside the mainstream. Most of the group were asking questions about modernity and postmodernity. Finally, someone, I

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can't remember whom, identified both John's and Justo's stances as "extramodern," that is, outside modernity. The two of them accepted that designation.

John's ability to think outside mainstream academia, outside of the United States, outside of Constantinian Christianity, was in part a product of his great intellect. It was also a product of his social location in the Mennonite community, with its long tradition of standing on the outside. But whereas many Mennonites desire acceptance within the mainstream, John was secure in his location outside the mainstream, was able to show the logical inconsistencies of mainstream theology (e.g., just war theory), won academic legitimacy for a Mennonite understanding of Christian faith, and unashamedly called others to a tradition outside the modern mainstream. I know of no other Mennonite theologian who has been as missionary as he, in his practice as well as the substance of his work.

Duane K. Friesen, Bethel College:

No doubt I was first influenced indirectly by John H. Yoder through Albert Meyer who was Academic Dean when I was a student at Bethel College. In the mid-1950s Meyer, the brother-in-law of Yoder, had been a partner in ecumenical discussions in Europe about peace. Through Meyer's influence I was inspired by the early Anabaptists and their vision of the church.

I remember first hearing directly of John H. Yoder at the Mennonite World Conference at Kitchener, Ontario in 1962. I was on my way to study at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN, and learned about his involvement in the historic ecumenical discussions between main line European churches and the Historic Peace Churches. These discussions were held in 1955 at Puidoux, Switzerland and two years later at Iserlohn, Germany. After graduating from Elkhart in 1965, I went to Berlin for a year of study. There I was asked by MCC to help arrange meetings with East German Christian students. We decided to discuss the little pamphlet John had presented at Iserlohn entitled, "Die Nachfolge als Gestalt der politischen Verantwortung im Neuen Testament." That little pamphlet was the basic argument for what became *The Politics of Jesus*, published in 1972.

I was fortunate to have had John in two classes in Elkhart. I still refer to my notes from the wonderful class in Anabaptist theology where I worked on Hans Denck. Denck's radical view of God as persuasive love, together with Yoder's emphasis on Christ's Lordship over both church and world, convinced me of the deep problems with various forms of dualism which believe in the necessity of a God of violent force to keep order in an evil world alongside the loving God of the gospel. Mennonites who were influenced by this dualism consequently had accepted war as an instrument by God for preserving order in the world, and had limited the significance of pacifism to the church.

I could not have written my book, *Christian Peacemaking and International Conflict: A Realist Pacifist Perspective* (1986) without the prior work of John. His main contribution to my thinking (already in his book, *Christian Witness to the State*, 1962) was the way in which he saw Jesus both as a norm for the Christian disciple and the basis for witness and action in the larger society. John's

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starting point is Jesus Christ as a political/social model of radical nonconformity. Jesus models an alternative politics of nonviolent servanthood made vivid in the cross. Jesus calls his followers to a way of life that is an alternative to a politics of historical management, a mode of consequentialist ethical reasoning that requires humans to "do evil that good may come about." Jesus Christ is not simply an example to be followed, but is eschatologically

the Lord of history, the Slain Lamb, whose way will ultimately be victorious over the principalities and powers. The followers of Jesus thus are called both to a radical faith or trust in the God of Jesus Christ who accomplishes God's purposes in history through nonviolent love and to radical obedience to the paradigm of the cross. This is the basis for John's commitment to Christian pacifism and his critique of just war theory.

One of the projects that I had special interest in was John's work on the relationship of Christians and Jews, the topic of the Menno Simons Lectures at Bethel College in 1982. Like John, I have been inspired by the advice of Jeremiah to the Jewish exiles in 6th century Babylon to "seek the shalom of the city where they dwell." John taught us that Christians can learn from the Jewish community, who lived for centuries as a faithful minority within Christian and Islamic civilizations. Jeremiah's vision is a model for the 20th century post-Constantinian church.

"John's life work demonstrates how the very historically rooted and particular concrete vision of life of the early followers of Jesus can inspire a universal vision with broad ramifications for the larger culture beyond the church."

For John the church is to embody, like the Jewish minority, an alternative cultural vision, which then becomes a basis for its mission and involvement in the cultural setting, wherever it is, as a creative pioneering community. His writings are full of suggestions of how the church has been and can be culturally creative in contributing to the "shalom of the city where it dwells" (through alternative models of nonviolent conflict resolution, in the development historically of hospitals and schools, through alternative models of restorative justice, by learning models of decision making in the context of the church and thus contributing to the development and growth of religious liberty and democracy which predate the Enlightenment).[1] In summary, John's life work demonstrates how the very historically rooted and particular concrete vision of life of the early followers of Jesus can inspire a universal vision with broad ramifications for the larger culture beyond the church.

Hansulrich Gerber, director, Mennonite Central Committee, Europe:

I learned from John Howard Yoder:

—to put mission and ecclesiology into a broad context which considers ecumenical and religious dimensions.

—to use a certain logic in thinking theologically which I find hard to describe briefly, but which to me is helpful and healthy. Perhaps it is that this logic is one that reframes arguments depending on the logic of the discussion partner. It is important to not simply take an argument, but to look behind its logic and rationale.

—to recognize and articulate a way of looking at Jesus that transcends the traditional evangelical Jesus-reconciles-me-with-God paradigm. It was from John Howard that I first found a way of putting a real name to my being uncomfortable with an egocentric faith in Jesus. Social ethics are not simply a derivative of Jesus' life and teaching, but actually the substance of it.

—not to be afraid of asking questions in matters that are supposedly settled.

Stanley Hauerwas, Duke University Divinity School:[2]

The 1978 *Festival Quarterly* had a feature called "Winter Profile" that featured John—he had an uncanny knack for getting into magazines more important than *First Things*. The interviewer asked John if he enjoyed his significance. "Oh, time has passed me by," he responded. (We are told he said this "without feeling.") "I won't strategize making sure I get my monument. I got caught between the

H. S. Bender generation and the Willard Swartley generation."

Obviously failing to get Yoder to be introspective, the interviewer tried again by asking Yoder if he was happy. "I haven't found it very useful to ask that question." The cult of happiness from Yoder's perspective was but a form of cultural conformity. But yes, he is thankful and does not feel hurt or oppressed. He notes: "So far our children haven't hurt their parents much. I have tenure. And I don't think I'll run out of Anabaptist sources." Yoder, we are told, said this with a tone of peace and just a pinch of resignation, noting, "I'm not concerned with building an empire."

For those of us fortunate to have known Yoder, this exchange from *Festival Quarterly* is quintessential John Yoder. Yoder viewed his own life with godly indifference. Such indifference, when it was turned on others, could be mistaken as a kind of arrogance; but it was anything but that. Yoder, born with extraordinary mental powers, had those powers shaped by a people for whom all power is a gift for service. Accordingly, Yoder never sought a career, an authorship, or even to be influential.

This puts anyone who comes to praise him even on the occasion of his death in a tough spot. As Christians we already know better than to try to insure we will not be forgotten—not, as the Stoics thought, because that is a fruitless task—but because it is the deepest sign of unfaithfulness. Any attempt to insure our memory in this world is the denial of that community that John now enjoys, that is, the communion of saints. Yet we also know that John would not like for any of us to say anything about him that seemed to make him more important than that he most cared about, that is, God's nonviolent kingdom. As Michael Cartwright, one of the ablest interpreters of John's work (i.e., *The Royal Priesthood*) observed, John has certainly gone to extreme lengths to make sure he did not have to respond to the *Festschrift* some of us are in the process of preparing.

Yet, like it or not, John changed my life and I, at least, think he ought to be held accountable for that. Reading Yoder made me a pacifist. It did so because John taught me that nonviolence was not just another "moral issue" but constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified messiah. Of course, I know that John was never quite sure what to make of my "conversion" to nonviolence. He never sought easy victories. You have to work to read what John has written, not because he wrote obscurely but because he found a way to publish in the most obscure places, though I had read much he had written, I suspect he suspected that my taking up his cause may have been too easy exactly because it fit too well with my general temptation to be "against."

At an event arranged by Jim Burtchaell to introduce new graduate students at Notre Dame to selected faculty members, John and I were asked to give short accounts of our life and work. John said he was a theologian only because he was no good at his father's greenhouse business in Ohio. It seems he had no real field—dabbling in Reformation history, biblical studies, theology, and ethics. He did say for many years he had written in defense of Christian nonviolence. But he confessed that as far as he knew, he had only convinced one person (me) to become a pacifist. I could tell, however, he felt a good deal of ambiguity about that "accomplishment."

John taught me that nonviolence was not just another 'moral issue' but constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified messiah.

In truth, I know I was a burden for John. In speech and writing John was exacting. He had the kind of exactness only an analytic philosopher could love. He never said more or less than needed to be said. "I haven't found it very useful to ask that question." Notice he did not say it is wrong to ask if one is happy; he said it is not useful. Such exactness can be quite exasperating. I, on the other hand, love exaggeration. Why say carefully what can be said offensively? John, committed as he was to the ministry of careful speech, I know, found exasperating how I said what I thought I had learned from him. Yet he was

patient with me—which is but an indication that he knew he even had to treat me nonviolently. I know at times it was not easy.

I suspect that was particularly true given my polemical style. Among Mennonites John not only could be but was combative. But he approached those "outside" the Mennonite world, Christian and non-Christian as well as critics of his work, first as a listener. I kept getting into fights because of what I had learned from him; but far from giving me comfort, he thought I was at fault. In truth, I think he was right. He knew how to be nonviolent because he had all those witnesses, those Anabaptist sources, to teach him how. So rather than showing the incoherence of this or that version of just war theory, John would try to find a way to hold advocates of just war to their own best insights. He really lived and thought that God is to be found in those whom we think to be our deepest enemy. As one new to the practice of nonviolence, I know that is a skill I can at best only dimly imagine, much less desire to live as John lived it.

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This means I simply cannot with truth accept his claims to his own insignificance. For many of us, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, he changed our world through how he lived and what he wrote. For example, I cannot imagine a meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics, a society in which John served as president, without John Yoder. I am sure that I, along with many others, will expect to see that enigmatic figure on the back row taking notes but saying nothing, though it may be a session on a topic that he knows more about than anyone in the world. (And it goes without saying that most sessions of the SCE were about matters he knew more about than those doing the talking.) So in a mode uncharacteristic of Yoder's way of working, I think it best to end with some of John's own words. This beautiful and exacting passage, beautiful because of its exactness, comes close to the end of *The Politics of Jesus*. I believe what John said in it is not only the heart of his work, the heart of Christian theology, but also the heart of what it means to live as a disciple of Christ:

> The key to the obedience of God's people is not their effectiveness but their patience. The triumph of the right is assured not by the might that comes to the aid of the right, which is of course the justification of the use of violence and the other kinds of power in every human conflict; the triumph of the right, although it is assured, is sure because of the power of the resurrection and not because of any calculation of causes and effects, nor because of the inherently greater strength of the good guys. The relationship between the obedience of God's people and the triumph of God's cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection.

Therefore it must be true, as John puts it, that "the people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe." A life capable of writing the passage above is not replaceable. But the very God that makes such a life possible we can be sure will send us new, and no doubt quite different, John Yoders. For now, however, we can rejoice in that grain of the universe God made present in the life of John Howard Yoder.

James Juhnke, Bethel College:

In December 1965 I was studying American history at Indiana University graduate school when I read John Yoder's memorandum/essay, "The Search for a Nonresistant Historiography." It was a provocative piece, never published. But it challenged my imagination and never let go.

Yoder accused Mennonite historians and ethicists of selling out to a kind of Niebuhrian "realism," allowing themselves to be "governed by a theology

foreign to the New Testament and to Anabaptism." It should be possible to interpret history, said Yoder, from a Christian nonresistant point of view. He boldly proposed a number of specific historical cases for pacifist revisionist interpretation.

I was delighted to participate in some of the conversations which followed from John's essay. It all seemed directly relevant to my prospective career as a nonresistant Christian historian. To exchange several letters with John on the issues was, for me, a significant rite of passage.

John extended his thoughts on nonresistant historiography (or "discerning the patterns of providence") in the book, *The Original Revolution* (1982). I did not get around to a focus on the topic until 1990, after twenty-five years of teaching and writing about American Mennonite history at Bethel College. In 1992 John helped us organize a major conference at Bethel on "Violence and Nonviolence in the American Experience." He contributed an essay, "The Burden and the Discipline of Evangelical Revisionism," to the published proceedings of that conference.

In the past few years I have been working on a book, to be co-authored by Carol Hunter, which will interpret main themes in American history from a revisionist peace perspective. John has been most generous in critiquing chapter drafts and in sharing clippings from his files for this project. We will miss him from the process, not least because he was the author of the idea itself.

Albert J. Meyer, Goshen, Indiana:

From the time of our 1946 cattle boat trips to Europe and then our rooming together in John's second and senior year and my first year at Goshen College to the 20 minutes of conversation on peace theologians in his home the night before John died, John's influence on my life and thought has been incalculable.

We were from the same congregation in Ohio, a congregation remarkable for over 150 years for its nurturing of the gifts of its members. We attended Goshen College and were inspired by the vision of Harold Bender and his colleagues. John increasingly felt that the Anabaptist word for our time was that those who used the name of Christ needed to live in believers church communities of commitment and corporate mission, rather than in the establishment systems of the age of Christendom.

One of the most formative experiences in my early years was in Mennonite Central Committee Europe in the mid-1950s. I was 25 years old, had just finished my studies at Princeton and Basel, and then was asked to be director of MCC in France and Mennonite contact person with the representatives of the Historic Peace Churches in Europe and with European church people. It was a time when some of the German church people who had opposed Hitler during the war were asking how a church could be more independent of political authorities like Hitler—how the church could really be the church. In France, Andre Trocme and his church community in France had sheltered Jews and resisted Hitler during the occupation. We had contact with these fellow Christians in Germany and France, as well as with theologians in England and Scandinavia and Waldensians in Italy. We discovered an unprecedented interest in what the Mennonites and other believers church people had to say on the crucial issues with which they were wrestling.

> "When experienced and prophetic European church leaders and theologians said they were ready to question the established Christendom pattern of the centuries and wanted to learn from the vision and experience of the Anabaptists, that was a challenge."

The climax for me came as about 30 of us met at Puidoux near Lake Geneva in Switzerland for four days in August, 1955. This was the first serious theological conversation in over 400 years between representatives of the Anabaptist movement and leaders in the Central European state churches. It was John's first "coming out" on the European theological scene. In the first three days at Puidoux, John, still in theological studies at Basel, spent

much of the times between sessions in the halls and woods debating with one of the German theologians on theses the German theologian had formally stated in the background papers. The two were asked to bring their debate into the plenary session late on the third day. The conversation was intense. Then the German theologian retracted two of his theses, and the whole group moved toward consensus. Many in the group stayed up until well past midnight. At least one of the German theologians said they had not experienced anything like this since the tense meetings they had had in 1933 at Barmen. In retrospect, one could say that some of the participants in that conversation gave much of the rest of their lives to pursuing the vision clarified for us in those four days.

That was a formative experience. When experienced and prophetic European church leaders and theologians said they were ready to question the established Christendom pattern of the centuries and wanted to learn from the vision and experience of the Anabaptists, that was a challenge. I learned from John Yoder that the Lord has entrusted us with a word that we need to be ready to share with many who are seeking for this word from the Lord in our time.

Wilbert R. Shenk, Fuller Theological Seminary:

My association with John Howard Yoder began in 1965 when I joined the staff of Mennonite Board of Missions, picking up the administrative work of the Overseas Missions Division in which John had been engaged for a number of years in association with J. D. Graber. John began teaching full-time at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries but continued to serve MBM as a consultant.

It was immediately apparent that John related to the mission of the church out of the conviction that it was foundational to Christian discipleship and ecclesial identity. John's published work has reflected his pathbreaking thought as ethicist and theologian. Largely unrecognized is his contribution to missionary theology.

From the beginning it was evident that he found in the more fluid "mission situation" an opportunity to challenge conventional interpretations of mission and evangelism. The "sectarian" shadow under which Mennonites labored in North America proved in most of the world to be the experience of all Christians, for all were in a minority position.

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John's lifelong commitment to ecumenical conversation—adumbrated in his Basel doctoral dissertation—found full scope in this context. He modeled for us ecumenical engagement with other Christians on basic theological issues. While respecting and understanding other traditions, regardless of where they were on the spectrum, he continually challenged them with a more profound understanding of the work of Jesus Christ. In these conversations he typically played the role of bridge builder, a mediator between the polarities represented by conciliars and conservative Evangelicals, for example. Much of this was carried on behind the scenes and off the record in groups such as the Malone consultations in the 1960s.

In the West, evangelism had long been understood as addressing the individual's spiritual status before God. Discipleship was said to belong to a later nurture phase. John insisted that the gospel is not truly proclaimed if the ethical dimension is not at its center. No one should be lured into saying "yes" to Jesus, only to learn later that the gospel involves learning to live by a set of values that the world finds uncongenial. Jesus engaged in no such sleight of hand; neither should we.

In *The Politics of Jesus* (1972), John gave us a comprehensive and coherent theological basis for

both a missionary theology and a theology of discipleship. Implicitly, he showed why we should scrap the separate compartments—favored by other ecclesiastical traditions. and accepted uncritically by most Mennonites—marked "evangelism," "mission," "ethics," "discipleship," etc. Indeed, not to do so was to perpetuate a truncated and desiccated gospel. Contrary to what we had long assumed and reinforced by what we borrowed from mainstream evangelicalism, the historic Mennonite commitment to the way of love and nonviolence had to be integral to the gospel advocated in our evangelization.

Few contemporary theologians write theology that nerves the church for its mission. Like his theological mentor Karl Barth, John Howard Yoder demonstrated in all that he wrote that this is the only kind of theology worth our while. *Soli Deo Gratia!*

Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary:

First, I should have done a better job of learning modesty from John. When it was so clear from several sessions at the Society of Christian Ethics that John's influence was showing up in several sessions, I said to him as we were leaving the plenary session on Richard Hays's book, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, "You must really be happy; your influence is showing all over the place!" He replied: "Not mine; Jesus'."

Many years earlier, I had thanked him strongly for the good influence and encouragement he had been for my own development. He replied, "Glen, you were already writing those things before you ever read my writings."

Second, I learned courage and clarity in asserting that we need Christian ethics as following Jesus. I learned courage and clarity in asserting the inadequacy of Ivy League ethics and German Lutheran ethics, in their avoiding the concreteness of Jesus' ethics and avoiding concrete guidance from Jesus' words and mission. I was trained in Ivy League ethics, and my subservience held back my own sense of what is needed for prophetic ethics that lay members of churches can follow.

John taught this to me especially in the first section of *The Politics of Jesus*, where he takes on the Ivy League ethicists. In 1976, I presented one of the papers at the session in Kansas City organized by the Mennonite Central Committee on *The Politics of Jesus*. I showed how Yoder was right in his criticism of H. Richard Niebuhr's ethics, but then argued that there were some dimensions that H. Richard Niebuhr could add to Yoder's argument. John liked my paper, and we did a series of lectures together in some universities and seminaries, extending the theme of following Jesus. hen he suggested we write *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* (Abingdon Press, 1996) together, later to be joined by Diane Yeager. We engaged in extensive dialogue as we wrote that book, and I learned much from the dialogue. John's criticisms of Niebuhr greatly strengthened my sense of the need for guidance from concrete norms that come from Jesus. Another was John's focus on "practices," which fit really well with the parallel work I had been doing on "transforming initiatives" as the key to recovering the Sermon on the Mount for Christian ethics, Christian living, and church teaching.

Another was John's recovery of the biblical concept of the *powers* and *authorities*. This gives us a way of naming the power structures and their fallenness, and our need for independence from them, without demonizing them or shutting our mouths so that we utter no prophetic criticisms of them. Menno Simons told the powers and authorities that they were under Christ, and he held up the prophetic plumbline of justice and the messianic measure of peace to show what they should be doing. John's *The Christian Witness to the State*, and now his new book, *For the Nations*, show how to hold up the biblical practices of justice and peacemaking before the powers and authorities. He diagnoses our situation as like the people of Israel in dispersion in Babylon: We are to seek the Shalom (peace, justice, health, healing, salvation) of the city to which God has dispersed us (Jeremiah 29:7).

I learned twenty other things, all of them important, but you don't have the space here for them. I also learned how to confront a colleague. Whenever I thought that something I was writing

would make John happy, he would regularly confront me with yet another point where he feared I was not saying all that I should. A week before he died, he confronted me for "waffling" on my commitment to nonviolence. Even after my lifetime of dedication to peacemaking, and my three books on peacemaking! What more could he want? I was so looking forward to his response to the clear statement that I was preparing in response to his influence and the influence of my brilliant Mennonite PhD student, Paulus Widjaja. I am so sad that he won't be able to respond to it in this lifetime. I wonder what he'll say in heaven? "Well done, thou good and faithful friend!" or "Well, you got half of it!"?

J. Denny Weaver, Bluffton College:

It is difficult to overestimate the theological importance of John H. Yoder for twentieth-century theology and social ethics. John reshaped the understanding of nonviolence and peace church ecclesiology for both Mennonites and for wider Christendom. After him and because of him, the theological agenda has taken a different shape. His ability to reshape the questions made him arguably the most significant Mennonite theologian in the history of the Anabaptist movement, and one of the half-dozen most significant theologians of any stripe for the 20th century. I am grateful for this opportunity to acknowledge John's shaping of my theological understanding.

Growing up as a Mennonite, I believed what the church taught. But since I reflected the sense of Mennonite insecurity or inferiority that a number of Mennonites of my age recall, I was not convinced that Mennonite views could truly be defended. Somehow we had to accept our beliefs on faith, in contrast to others who had beliefs that made sense and were founded on solid ground. At the most mundane level, John demonstrated that Mennonite thought made sense. After John it was no longer possible or necessary for Mennonites to think that they had to "take it on faith." John H. Yoder's analysis also made free church—or believers church—ecclesiology and a nonviolent Christian ethic credible to the nonpacifist world. That is, John established the foundation of pacifist thought in a way that those who disagreed could not simply reject it as irrelevant or uninformed. John showed that a nonviolent ethic was clearly defensible in the modern world.

The most important learning from John was that we are *Christ*ians. If rejection of violence is true, that truth is not because Mennonites believed or defended it. It is true because it is an integral and intrinsic component of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Likewise, a free church ecclesiology is true not because of its association with Anabaptist history, but because that ecclesiology is the result of a community that lives to reveal and demonstrate to the world the reign of God, which simultaneously reveals how the world differs from the reign of God. John's theology was *Christ*ian, and it addressed every one who claimed that name. A theology that is only of or for Mennonites is not worth keeping.

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Michael L. Westmoreland-White, Louisville, Kentucky:

I come from a military family (both sides), in which a term of service in one branch of the military or another was simply expected. So, at 17 I joined the army for a four-year hitch without too much thought about the matter. For some reason I cannot now recall, by 19

(halfway through my enlistment) I was memorizing the Sermon on the Mount. Its tension with my service led to my becoming a conscientious objector and being discharged before my enlistment was up. I received no support from my family or church, who all insisted that I had misread the Scriptures and treated me as a moral failure. A friend loaned me a copy of *The Politics of Jesus* with the cryptic comment that I might "get more out of it" than he had. He was right. That work gave solid roots to my newfound pacifist convictions and reoriented my entire grasp of what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. I have since worn out three copies and continue to learn more about discipleship at each rereading.

Another thing I learned from John Howard Yoder was the meaning of the church. In *The Priestly Kingdom*, especially the chapter, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood," I finally understood the Pauline concept of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I learned what it meant to read the Scriptures in communion with others and how the New Testament intended the church to be a community of moral discernment. That work also reinforced my commitment to lay ministry, as did *The Fullness of Christ* and *Body Politics*.

My own Baptist tradition at its best emphasized a rejection of Constantinianism, but Yoder's works continue to refine my grasp of the relationship between the Church and the World.

The essay, "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," in *The Priestly Kingdom* opened my eyes to the difficulty of avoiding new versions of ecclesial chaplaincy to the dominant culture. *The Christian Witness to the State* and now *For the Nations* continue to refine my understanding of the church as an alternate-but-engaged community, rejecting Qumran-like "withdrawal strategies" as much as Herodian-Sadduccean collaborations and embracing a missionary strategy first articulated in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer. 29) of seeking the shalom of the cities where God has scattered us—but never on those cities' own terms.

Along with others, John Yoder also taught me how to be biblical. His "biblical realism," allowing the texts to speak on their own terms instead of needing to conform to some contemporary paradigm, has been a constant source of inspiration. My own exploration of a "hermeneutics of participation" in the texts of Scripture, owning the biblical narratives as my/our own story in order to see the world through biblical categories attempts to further insights I first learned from Yoder. Yoder thought my terminology unnecessary, but affirmed that I had learned to be biblical. I plan on framing that remark.

Finally, I learned important lessons from John's fall, public disgrace, and submission to church discipline. I learned not to turn any mentor, no matter how respected, into an idol. I learned that one could admit one's sins, repent, and undergo the corrective discipline of the church—painful though it was—with grace. I learned from the Mennonite Church's actions that it was indeed possible for the church to avoid the twin errors of cheap grace and legalism. I rejoice that real healing had begun prior to John's death, especially that he had begun worshiping once more at Prairie Street Mennonite Church.

My debt to John Howard Yoder is immense, and I pray I never stop learning from him.

Notes

[1] It is a mistake to equate Yoder's position with Stanley Hauerwas's views. This is often done because Hauerwas attributes such importance to Yoder in shaping his ideas. Yoder is much more ready to see connections between what the church stands for and movements in the culture at large. In some of his recent writings, for example, he has distinguished his approach from Hauerwas. In a footnote in the article, "Meaning After Babel: With Jeffrey Stout Beyond Relativism," Yoder says: "A soft pluralism, when consistent, provides the most livable cultural space for Jews and Anabaptists, as well as for Jehovah's Witnesses and followers of Rev. Moon. As a civil arrangement, pluralism is better than any of the hitherto known alternatives. As an ecclesiastical arrangement, it is better than the monarchical episcopate. As a marketplace of ideas, it is better than a politically correct campus or a media empire homogenized by salesmanship. For such reasons, Stanley Hauerwas's characterization of English-speaking justice as a set of 'bad ideas' (*After Christendom*, 1991) strikes me as too simple." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Spring 1996, p.135.

[2] This is the text of "John Howard Yoder: A Remembrance" which Hauerwas presented at Yoder's funeral.

Some Hard Questions to Menno: How Might He Respond?

Cornelius J. Dyck

Was Menno Simons the founder of the *Mennonite church*? The answer is both yes and no. Given the name *Mennonites* it certainly sounds that way, though there are groups of the global family who are not called that: in the Netherlands *Doopsgezinde* (baptism-minded), in Switzerland until recently the *Old Evangelical Baptism-Minded Congregations of Switzerland*, in Ethiopia *Meserete Kristos*, and others in many places, including North America (for example the Hutterian Brethren, the Amish and others).

We know that in a time of chaos and disintegration of the fledgling Dutch and North European Anabaptist movement Menno came forward, at great peril and sacrifice for himself, to assume leadership of the scattered remnant after the tragedy of Münster, 1534-35. The term *Men(n)ist* was first used in 1545 by Countess Anna of East Friesland to distinguish between the desirable settlers with Menno's theology, and the more radical Davidjorists whom she feared. So yes, given his twenty-five years of intense labor (1536-1561), and the name *Mennonite*, we can say that Menno was the founder of the Mennonites.

But before Menno there were the *Swiss Brethren, the South German, Austrian and Moravian Anabaptists.* Note that Conrad Grebel died in 1526, Michael Sattler, Felix Mantz, Hans Denck and Hans Hut in 1527, Balthasar Hubmaier, Leonard Schiemer, and Hans Schlaffer in 1528, Georg Blaurock in 1529, and the list goes on to Jakob Hutter in 1536, and many others. There were thriving cells and communities in these areas before Menno became actively involved. Thus, while our knowledge of the early connection from South Germany and Switzerland to Holland and North Germany via Strasbourg and Melchior Hoffman remains tenuous, most of these groups later also called themselves Mennonites, but historically they were antecedent! There are, however, no references to any of them in Menno's writings!

Can we assume that Menno knew about the South German Anabaptists? Probably. His work among the so-called "High Germans" (also known as Overlanders in Holland) in the Cologne-Aachen and Rhineland area would have brought many contacts with them, as did the visit of Zylis and Lemke to the North and their subsequent correspondence. Further evidence lies in a letter sent from Switzerland to Cologne in the first half of 1530 in response to a request for information from some people there about the new movement.

But did Menno know the Swiss Brethren or the Schleitheim articles of 1527? Apparently not, although we must assume that there were Swiss members in the Overland congregations. A gloss in Menno's letter to Zylis and Lemke, presumably by Menno, states that in Upper Germany and Moravia Overlanders were called Swiss Brethren. We know of no contact

Classic Menno portrait

by Jacobus Burghart 1683

Menno had with Strasbourg, a second home for the Swiss and others. However, he does report in his conversion account that in his struggle with the baptism and Mass issues he consulted Bucer's (Strasbourg) and Bullinger's (Zürich) writings, but he does not say which writings. While this account was written in 1554, it is a report of his struggle during the decade before 1536. Bucer and Bullinger both knew the Anabaptists well; the former had great respect for Michael Sattler and deplored his cruel death. The search for which of their writings Menno might have read goes beyond our present focus.

Still another word about origins needs to be said before proceeding with Menno. In 1984 Calvin A. Pater published his controversial volume entitled *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements* which, in its dissertation form, was called "Karlstadt: Father of the Anabaptist Movements." In its preoccupation with Thomas Müntzer origins, subsequent Anabaptist-Mennonite historiography has not given this work the attention it deserves. Pater clearly demonstrates the influence of Karlstadt on the early Swiss Brethren and Zwingli, as well as on Melchior Hoffman for Northern Europe. Karlstadt was, for a time, Luther's right hand man and dean of the theological faculty at the University of Wittenberg. In using the term *Baptist*, Pater states that, "The Baptists of continental Europe have first claim to the name 'Baptists' [*Täufer=Doopsgezinden*], since they used the name nearly a century before the rise of the English branch of the Baptists."

Why did Menno take on the major new responsibilities for the scattered movement we described earlier? It appears that he had deep guilt feelings over the massacre at the Old Cloister of people on their way to Münster, and in which his brother Pieter(?) likely perished. But he was also driven by the evangelical zeal of his new faith, which had been nourished by nearly a decade of Bible reading and his own recent popular preaching. An eschatological fervor was arising in his life which fueled the dynamic of faithfulness in what most people thought were the last days. He left the old church in 1536, but remained underground for some time, occupied with writing, presumably prayer, and even marriage to Gertrude.

Menno's leadership began quietly in 1536, but David Joris (d. 1556) was still active as well. It was with the publication of his *Foundation of Christian Doctrine* in 1539-40 that Menno came fully into his own. For several years he had already spoken against the Münster events, both to non-Anabaptists and to the sorely divided fledgling movement in which people were torn between pro- and anti-Münster factions, but it was the publication of his *Foundation Book* which clearly established his leadership role over against David Joris and others. The most gifted early leader of the peaceful wing was Obbe Philips, who had been baptized and ordained by a Melchiorite group in 1533, followers of Melchior Hoffman, and had himself then ordained David Joris, his own brother Dirk Philips, and Menno Simons, but left the movement by 1540. Menno entered into Obbe's legacy, but with a less spiritualized theology.

Menno traveled extensively for more than a decade after 1536, south to Cologne and the Rhineland area, north to East Friesland, Wismar, Lübeck, Hamburg, and even to Prussia, now Poland, in 1549. Eventually he settled in East Friesland (Germany) where he was able to write and publish, yet his travels continued, including secret trips to his native Holland. It is amazing that during the first ten years of his leadership he was able to write about twelve major treatises despite his duties, travels, and constant peril for him and his family, which included three children. A bounty was in effect for his capture since 1542. It was a gracious gift of God that he was not caught and burned. When he left the old church, Menno was forty years of age, which was already beyond the life expectancy of that time.

As he grew older his writings became more polemical. His co-elder Dirk Philips took on increasing responsibility, as his banning of Adam Pastor in 1546 illustrates, which may have led to tension with Menno. In any case, his writings during the 1550s took on a defensive, pleading tone as in *A Very Sad Appeal to All Magistrates*

(1552), or in *A Melancholy and Christian Apology and Account . . . against False Accusations* (1552), or his summary of the faith which was now not called a *Foundation Book* but *A Thorough and Clear Confession of Poor and Miserable Christians Concerning Justification* . . . (1552) and others. His self-confidence had clearly been shaken. However, we also have pastoral letters written in the late 1550s, which show Menno as compassionate, loving, and understanding.

Menno's theology has been analyzed in many conferences and publications. Here we have room for only a few comments. In 1952 the very learned Dutch historian Nanne van der Zijpp stated what remains indisputable when he wrote that the two poles of Menno's theology are *Bible* and *Church*, with the New Testament primary, and that his emphasis on the centrality of the church increased as he grew older. Any emphases outside of the New Testament were philosophy, glosses, or human wisdom. Menno's writings overflow with so many biblical references that they may have led to a new legalism. We seem to hear more law than gospel, though there is also spontaneous freedom in his writings. In the quadricentennial year of Menno's death, remembered in 1961, Franklin H. Littell gave his first two lectures at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries on these same themes, *Word* and *Church*, followed by a third on Menno's *Doctrine of the Laity*, and a fourth on his doctrine of the *Holy Spirit*. While these interpretations come from an earlier generation of historians, they remain essentially valid. It is important to stress that Spirit and Word interplay with equal force in his writings.

Before proceeding to the questions and answers, let me identify a cluster of themes that have not often been discussed by scholars, but which I consider central to Menno's life and thought: I am thinking of his emphasis on the new birth and regeneration, repentance, conversion, and sanctification or holiness (*heiliging*). I do not believe that we can understand Menno without giving serious attention to these issues of new life.

For Menno the new birth and regeneration were imperative for Christian living and discipleship. The experience of sanctification, or holiness, was reciprocal, that is, in walking with Christ the believer becomes more like him, an ontological change takes place in the believer and is a continuing process. An old medieval, mystical term (Tauler, *Theologia Deutsch*)—deification (*vergotting*)—is used by Menno (and Dirk) to describe believers' participation in the divine nature. For us as "second generation" persons this means that the new birth may grow out of traditional nurture in family and church, with obedience to family and communal ethics, growing into a genuine commitment or series of commitments to Christ as Lord and Savior. Our revivalistic North American culture has often prevented us from hearing Menno (and Dirk) clearly on this. We do not become perfect, we

A muscular Menno

as a printer, artist unknown, used in *Bethel College Bulletin*, Feb. 1932

Menno's last home

and Linden tree, in Alt Fresenburg bei Bad Oldesloe, Germany

remain sinners, but in conforming to Christ we become more Christ-like, alone and together in the fellowship of the church, we find new joy, a clear identity, and consequently a new message and courage for witness.

This is the heart of Menno's message, not his Christology or doctrine of the church, not discipleship or teachings on ordinances, not even his strong emphasis on peace. And because this cluster of themes does not easily lend itself to systematic theological analysis, or more likely, theologians feel uncomfortable with them, Menno has too often been passed up by scholars. Yet this is as powerful a message as Calvin's *Institutes*, or any of the many Reformation writings of the sixteenth century.

Questions Often Asked

Dear Brother Menno: We thank God for your life and work. In order for us to understand you better we want to ask you a few questions. We will base our answers on your writings as best we know how.

First, and most personal, we note a definite change of attitude in many of your early 1550s writings from those when you began writing in the late 1530s. Your optimism, courage, and self-confidence seems to have been shaken. What happened to bring about this change? We know that Roland H. Bainton has stated: "It is a grave problem to psychoanalyze the dead," and we do not want to do that, but we do want to understand you better.

Answer: The only way to bridge the 500 year span from your age back to mine is for you to rely on the Scriptures as I did. Also, what was relevant in my time may not always be so in yours. But to your question: my faith was not shaken one whit, but yes, I was discouraged. First, I was beginning to feel the weight of my age and homelessness. I was tired and worn out. While in the Cologne area I hurt my leg in an accident and became a cripple and had to use a crutch from then on. Can you imagine being on the run and trying to be inconspicuous with a crutch? It seemed as though everyone was after me; a reward of 200 guilders had been announced for my capture. The bark of a dog at night might mean that they had found me. My family and I seldom knew where we would spend the next night. I was surely ready to die for my faith, but the church and my family needed me.

Second, though I had written numerous treatises under very difficult circumstances to explain our faith, including the *Foundation Book*, these seemed to make little difference to church leaders, theologians, or ruling authorities. Their hearts were mostly hardened against us. Their attitude did not change much. We were always called heretics and revolutionaries. Our writing and preaching also made little impact on society. Many people agreed with us but were afraid of martyrdom if they joined us. Jan Claesz was executed because he had printed 600 copies of my booklet on baptism. Many heard and responded to

the gospel, but many more did not. Still, from 1530 to about 1555 we were the primary reform movement in the Netherlands.

Third, we had continuing problems within our own ranks. In 1547 we had to ban Adam Pastor (Rudolph Martens) because he seemed to deny the Trinity, but he ignored our authority and continued his ministry. Gillis van Aken, another elder, was found guilty of adultery while working in the Antwerp area, and we had to ban him in 1552. However, he showed true repentance and was restored two years later. Elder Leenaert Bouwens was a good worker. He baptized over 10,200 persons according to his own list, but he was too harsh in applying the ban and I could not stop him. So yes, I became discouraged.

Second Question: You struggled with your conscience for nearly eleven years before you left the old church. Was that because you were weighing the gains and losses of leaving, not only for yourself, but also for the new community you envisioned? We have suffered both gain and loss in leaving the old church. Our worship services today, from my perspective, are often too plain and verbal: mostly a hymn, prayer, Scripture, and sermon. My spirit needs more: words of confession and pardon; hymns from traditional to pietist, to gospel, to modern forms; variety in worship music and singing; visual aids like a cross, some forms of art (paintings, sculpture, potter's work, banners)—our sanctuaries mostly feel cold and austere, not inviting; we have no mature, inclusive, and continuing liturgy which is familiar to worshipers across the Mennonite spectrum. For many of our people the church means Anabaptism; they are not aware of, nor connected with, the 1500 years of the history of God's people before the Reformation. Were you aware of what all we would be *losing* by cutting yourself off from tradition, the *una sancta*, the heritage of faith? Were you aware that tradition is inevitable, and that even your firm commitment to the Scriptures would eventually lead to another tradition, which we now surely have?

Answer: Let me say again that part of the problem you describe is due to the 500 years between my age and yours, which can only be bridged in and through the Scriptures. We meet there in Christ, the Living Word, and in the community of faith to which it gives birth. I have written repeatedly that we are part of the *una sancta*, in fact, that we are more the true church than the Roman one was then because we tried to re-establish the church of the New Testament. At several points in my writings I expressed my agreement with the Council of Nicea of 325 and the three other early ecumenical councils. I used the Apostles' Creed. I refer to Tertullian (d. 220) at least a dozen times. During my training for the priesthood we studied the "Fathers of the Church" primarily, not the Bible, and I surely never forgot them.

You must remember, however, that the old church was mostly in a sad state of disrepair: many priests were poorly trained, and since celibacy was required of them it often led to immorality; they charged people for every service rendered because they needed the money to support their (illegitimate) families; some were gluttons and also alcoholics—perhaps because they drank too much wine daily at mass. Anti-clericalism was very strong, people just did not trust the priests, and therefore, not the church either. Martin Luther (d. 1546) brought much reform, but split the church without reforming the main body. He continued the alliance of the church with the state.

Beyond all this, you will know that we could not establish stable congregations with continuity of worship to the next generation. We were mostly on the run, though it was better in some areas, especially Prussia. This was the price we were willing to pay for spiritual renewal. Most of our leaders were lay persons. We longed to establish a church as we found it in the New Testament. We do not read of any elaborate liturgies there! Believe me that I had also become very tired of the traditions and ceremonies in the old church because they seemed to be empty forms without meaning. I can understand that over time the generations after us might long for some of the things you mention, but let me warn you that they can easily become new binding traditions. As one scholar said, "tradition is the living faith of the

Menno Monument

near Oldesloe

dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

Third Question: We are deeply grateful for your emphasis on the church in the New Testament, especially also your concern for holiness, a church "without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind," (Eph. 5:27). You believed that salvation and sanctification belong together. But you also taught that this holiness is a lifelong process of walking with Christ and thus becoming more like him (deification). Why then were you so harsh in banning people, especially marital avoidance (shunning), instead of giving them time to grow within the loving supervision and teaching of the church? You yourself felt you were too rigorous and, near the end of your life, confessed that few had actually been won back to the faith. You wrote much about love, but was this practice not the opposite? We do not understand you on this today.

Answer: I did not teach perfection nor work-righteousness, of which we were often accused. I mentioned again and again that we are all sinners saved by the grace of God. But open sin must not be tolerated in the body of Christ. It does not help the person involved to do nothing about an open sin, and is a poor witness to everyone. There were many free spirits around us after Münster who tried to mislead new seekers. The church is the body and bride of Christ. We believed we were living in the endtime, and that Christ would soon return. Would Christ, the bridegroom, claim an impure bride as his own? There must be discipline and mutual accountability in the church. Excommunication (the ban) was necessary.

But I was forced to agree to marital avoidance by my fellow elders Leenaert Bouwens and Dirk Philips in 1557. The case involved Swaen Rutgers of Emden, whose husband had been banned, for some unknown reason, by Bouwens and who insisted that she leave him, which she refused to do. Then Bouwens and Dirk also banned her. I wrote a letter to Bouwens urging moderation, as did several other elders, but to no avail. Bouwens, Dirk, and I then met at Harlingen in the spring of 1557 and they applied much pressure until I yielded and joined them. But it was not right. The group known as the Waterlanders left us in protest at this point. Two years later Bouwens and Dirk banned the High Germans, which I regretted very much, because they did not agree to this rigor. Still, I do believe that order and discipline are necessary in the church, even in any intentional and healthy organization.

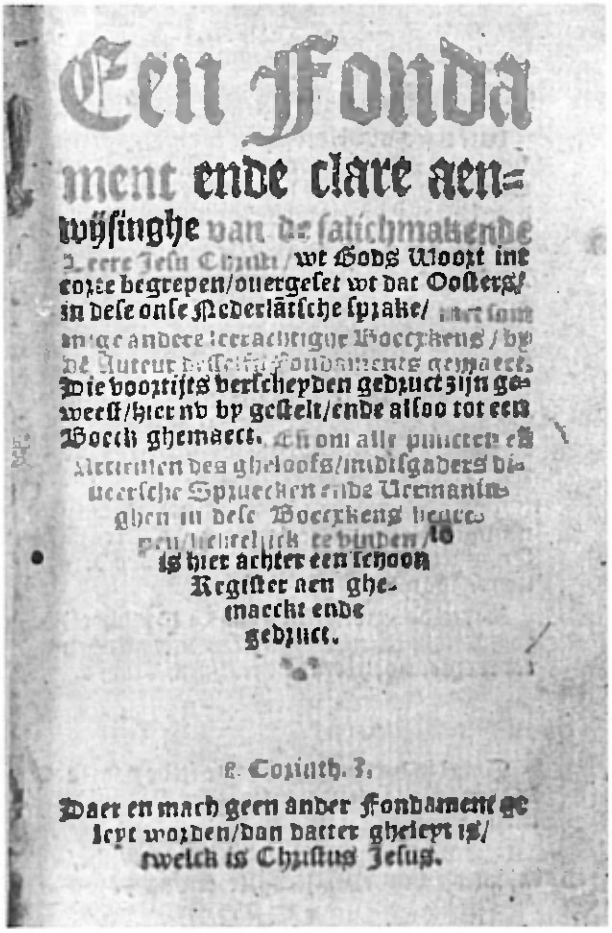
Fourth Question: You do not refer to the Schleitheim articles of 1527 in your writings. However, the subjects the seven articles discuss are basically included in your treatises. Also, the nine *Wismar Resolutions* which you and six elders drew up in 1554 gave guidance to the congregations. Still, *Resolution seven* is not clear: it seems to say that

believers may go to court to collect money due to them. Further, *Resolution eight* allows the carrying of a staff or sword (rapier) but not attack weapons, except for soldiers doing guard duty. And *Resolution nine* specifies that no one is to preach unless called to that work by a congregation or elder. Was the elder or the congregation the primary authority? We are not clear about the meaning and implications of these three resolutions.

Answer: We spent most of our time at Wismar on the divisive issues of the ban, marital avoidance, and church discipline, as the first five resolutions show. Both *Resolution seven* and *eight* involve the believers' relationship to government. All my writings teach a clear church- world dualism, the kingdoms of this world inhabited by the unregenerate and the spiritual kingdom of Christ inhabited by the regenerate. Believers enter this kingdom through the new birth and regeneration.

This may be seen most clearly in my *Defense and Account . . . against False Accusations* of 1552. In it I wrote, "We confess publicly and with a clear voice, as we have always done since we have served the Lord, that the office of the magistrate is ordained of God, and have always been obedient to it as long as it was not against God and his Word." I understand this to mean that a Christian can be a magistrate (ruler) as long as he follows Christ and does not shed blood. He is to protect the innocent and punish the wicked, but not to use capital punishment. Also, believers are not to swear oaths, as Jesus said. However, the structures of society are open to believers, as in collecting debts, provided it is always done in the spirit of Christ, does not oppress the poor, and is not for selfish gain.

We were not agreed on *Resolution eight* about weapons on our ships of trade to defend against pirates because that would involve violence, but believed guard duty to be permitted, but again, without violence. The guard would simply sound the alarm. Concerning *Resolution nine* it is true that in the early charismatic phase of our movement leaders were simply called directly by the Lord, including Dirk Philips and myself, though a small group of believers did first approach me, as I reported. The elders often made the decisions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Menno's *Foundation Book*

because a firm hand was needed, but some of our congregations felt they were left out, until this became an increasing point of tension.

Question Five: One final question: In his *Sendbrief* of 1652, Andreas Ehrenpreis, the last great Hutterite leader of the early period, wrote about you in his "Letter on Brotherly Community" as follows:

> Menno Simons, a wise and learned man, wrote many good and useful teachings in his *Foundation Book* and other writings. He came so near to perfection in writing about pride, greed, and other things, yet he neatly avoided, undoubtedly intentionally, to focus on community when he talked about the rich young man, as

also about the first church in Jerusalem, which had all things in community under the leading of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2, 4. He passed by the story of Ananias and Sapphira, and did not often refer to it, Acts 5. He praised Zacchaeus and wrote harshly about the lust for riches, but in directing his reprimands against his enemies he lulled his own people to sleep. Perhaps, if he had truly explained in his writings the fruit of love [as community], he would have had fewer followers, for those who have chosen the narrow way have always been few, Matt. 7: 13-14."

Why did you not promote community of goods?

Answer: The answer, it seems to me, is simple: neither Jesus nor the apostles taught community of goods. The account in Acts describes a temporary situation, not an enduring, prescriptive pattern. For me the alternative to community of goods is mutual aid, which I always stressed and practiced, as the following brief quotes from my writings illustrate:

"True evangelical faith is of such a nature that it cannot rest. . . . It clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute. . . . It does good to those who do it harm. . .";

or again,

"We stand before God and everyone willing to share our possessions with all our heart—gold, houses, farms, and everything we have, as little as it is, as well as to work and sweat to help meet the needs of the poor. . . ."

Or once more, in my *Defense and Account* of 1552, I answered those who charged us with community of goods (like Münster) by saying, "It is not customary that a wise and intelligent person clothes only half of his body, leaving the other half needy and naked. No, the reasonable person cares for all members [of the body]. So it must also be among those who are the Lord's church and body. All who are born out of God and possess the gift of the Spirit, and who are called to be one body in Christ Jesus . . . are ready in love to serve their neighbor, not only with money and goods but also, in an evangelical manner, with blood and death, according to the example of their Lord Jesus Christ."

Concluding Comment

It is surely possible that, if Menno were here, he might not recognize himself in what we have said. He and most Mennonites, I think, absolutize the essence of the New Testament church. But beyond that we must recognize that no other period, not even the sixteenth century, can be absolutized because the shape in which we express and live our faith inevitably changes from generation to generation. We understand the New Testament church, and our own sixteenth century heritage, within the culture, time, and place in which we live. If this sounds too relativistic let me say again that Menno's and our mutual assessment of each other's faith must ultimately be Christological. It is there that our ages can meet. I hope also that we will continue to discover that the full tradition of the church of Jesus Christ is longer, richer, and more faithful than ours alone.

Notes

[1] See Menno's letter in *Opera* Fol. 479-90, dated January 23, 1559 (cf: 1560); cf: *Complete Works of Menno Simons*, pp. 1001-1015.
[2] Leland Harder, ed., *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985), 338- 342. Appreciation is expressed to Leland Harder for reminding me of this evidence.
[3] *Opera* Fol. 489a; cf: *CWMS* p. 1013. The Schleitheim articles were published in Dutch in 1560.
[4] *Opera* Fol. 256b; cf: *CWMS* p. 669.
[5] Martin Bucer's (d. 1551) *Deutsche Schriften*, edited by Robert Stupperich (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1960ff.), vols. 2:225ff and 5:43-107, 258ff deal with the issues Menno was struggling with and fall into the time frame when he might have had access to them. Heinrich Bullinger's (d. 1575) forty-four year pastorate in Zürich, beginning with Zwingli's death in 1531, led to many contacts with the Swiss Brethren and writings against them. The best guide to this literature is still Heinold Fast, *Heinrich Bullinger*

und die Täufer (Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1959).
[6] Calvin Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements: The Emergence of Lay Protestantism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
[7] *Dat Fundament des Christelycken Leers*, door H. W. Meihuizen (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967).
[8] "A Confession," by Obbe Philips. *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*. George H. Williams and Anders M. Mergal, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 204-225. The original may be found in the "Heubuden Urkundenbuch," at the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof, 6719 Bolanden (06352), Pfalz, Germany. Obbe writes: "I am still miserable of heart today (ca. 1560) that I advanced anyone to such an office . . . Dietrich Philips in Amsterdam, David Joris in Delft, and Menno Simons in Groningen," Williams, 223.
[9] Among the earliest of these were *Concerning the Spiritual Resurrection* (1536) and *Concerning the New Birth* (1537), themes central to his developing theology.
[10] So H. W. Meihuizen: "Zijn zelf-vertrouwen had een knak gekregen," in *Menno Simons* (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1961), 47. *Een Seer Droeffelycke Supplicatie der Armen en Ellendige Christenen, aen alle Vroome, Goetgunstige, en behoorlijcke Overigheden . . . Opera Omnia Theologica* (1681), fol. 325-30; *Een Weemoedige ende Christelycke Ontschuldinge ende Verantwoordinge . . . Opera* (1681), fol. 491-516; *Een Grondelicke en klare bekentenisse der Armen en Ellendige Christenen . . . Opera* (1681), fol. 457-78.
[11] N. van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Arnhem: van Loghum Slaterus, 1952), 51. cf: *Opera* (1681), fol. 447a, 437a, etc.
[12] Franklin H. Littell, *A Tribute to Menno Simons* (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1961).
[13] See my *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), especially chapters 1, 3, and 4. Egil Grislis, "Menno Simons on Sanctification," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 69 (April 1994): 2326-246. Walter Klaassen, "Menno Simons: Molder of a Tradition," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 62 (July 1988), 368-386.
[14] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.
[15] Thus Menno writes: "O dear reader, let me say again that I formerly acted shamelessly against God and my neighbor, and even now I sometimes still think, speak, and act recklessly which, however, I hate with all my heart." *Opera*, 449b.
[16] For an excellent discussion of Menno and holiness see Egil Grislis, "Menno Simons on Sanctification," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 69 (April 1995), 226-246.
[17] *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* VII, pp. 54ff., 448-450; Menno writes: "My soul will not consent to your unseemly intentions, nor say yes to your plans. According to my small gift I desire to teach a gospel that builds up, not tears down." p. 449, *CWMS* pp. 1043-1045.It would have been possible for their influence to have come to the Netherlands from Strasbourg to Emden through Melchior Hoffman in 1530, but we find no trace of this in any of the earlier Dutch writings. They were first published in Dutch in 1560.
[18] *Een Weemoedige ende Christelycke Ontschuldinge ende Verantwoordinge . . . ende valsche beschuldinge . . . . Opera* fol. 491-516. cf: *CWMS* 543-577.
[19] *Opera* 498b; cf: *CWMS* 549. Menno's withdrawal from the "world" was not simply passive; note his letters to the authorities, which document his early hope that they could be persuaded to the believers' point of view. In this he reflected a different spirit than that which the drafters of Schleitheim, article 4, had arrived at by 1527, though perhaps not so different from the early Grebel circle.
[20] The *Wismar Resolutions* may be found in *BRN* VII, 51-54; Karel Vos, *Menno Simons, 1491- 1561* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1914), 123-127. *CWMS* 1041-1042.
[21] The congregation versus elder authority issue came to a head soon after Menno's death in 1561, leading to the Frisian-Flemish division in 1567, and subsequently to other divisions. For an account see Cornelius J. Dyck, et al., *The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504-1568* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 468ff.
[22] Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 126.
[23] *Opera*, fol. 447a; cf: Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, 88. *Opera*, fol. 56b; cf: *CWMS*, 200.
[24] *Opera*, fol. 504b; cf: *CWMS*, 558.

Mennonite Integration in Costa Rica

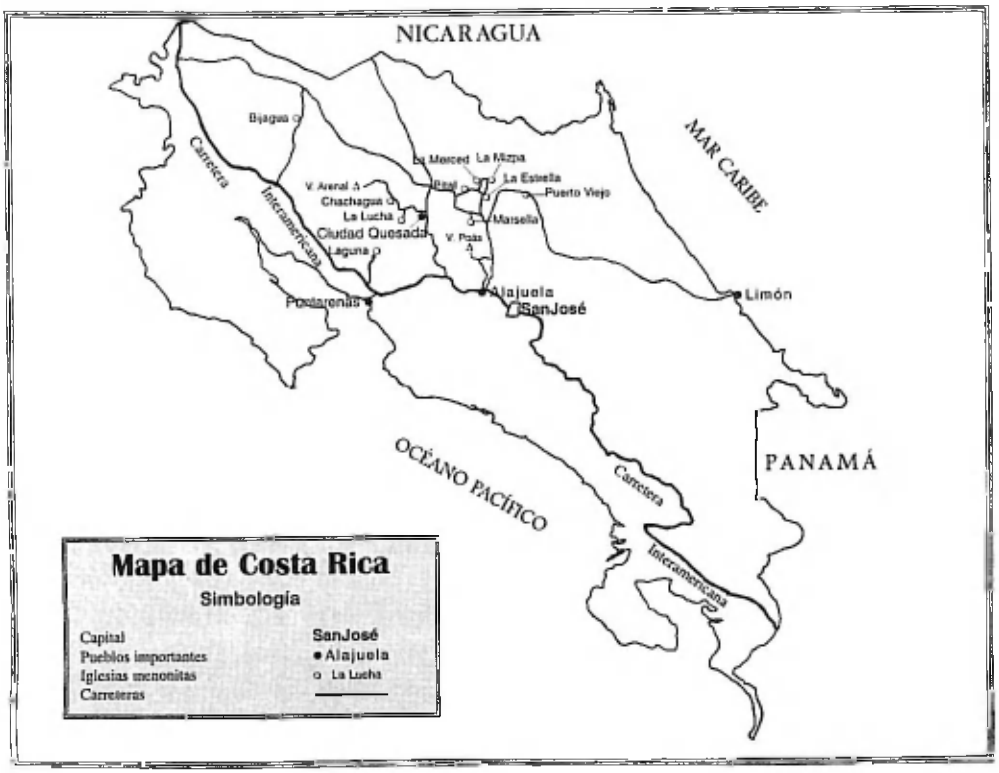
John D. Roth

As Mennonites in North America continue to debate the details of integration, a small, mission-minded Beachy Amish community in rural Costa Rica has already moved several steps beyond its more progressive General Conference and Mennonite Conference cousins in the north. For more than a decade, families in the San Carlos region of Costa Rica bearing names like Yoder and Swartzentruber have gathered alongside the Friesens and the Duecks to join in worship with their Vargas and Carvajal neighbors. The story of how this cluster of ten congregations has managed to blend Pennsylvania Dutch-speaking Beachy Amish, the Plattdeutsch traditions of the Kleine Gemeinde, and the native culture of Spanish-speaking Costa Ricans began almost 30 years ago.

In June of 1968, three Beachy Amish families established a tiny settlement in Arenal, Costa Rica in the shadow of Mount Arenal, one of the country's most active volcanoes. Under the leadership of Sanford Yoder, ordained as the denomination's first "evangelist," the group intended to establish a new model of missions that they called "evangelization through colonization." From the beginning, they resolved to be self-supporting, to commit themselves to long-term residence in Costa Rica, and to adapt as much as possible to local culture. "I know of no more effective way [to carry out the Great Commission]," Yoder wrote in an October 19, 1968 letter to *The Budget*, "than by the grace of God to demonstrate the Christian life in the ordinary walk of life. It is my firm conviction that to live and work with the people is a more stable and Biblical approach than the foreign missionary, who is not really one of them because he is supported and is here today and later goes back to his home community which is a superficial position which the local people sense."

For the first eight years the settlement struggled for survival, supporting itself with cattle farms, truck gardens and the occasional influx of new energy and resources of other immigrants from the U.S. Though their initial mission success was relatively meager, these early years were a crucial time for the newcomers to learn the Spanish language and become acclimated to Costa Rican customs and culture. In 1976, when a new hydroelectric dam flooded the Arenal valley, the small community relocated on grassy scrub land fifty miles west in the San Carlos region. Coincidentally, at about the same time a group of Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites from Spanish Lookout Colony, Belize purchased land nearby. Like the Beachy Amish, they had come to Costa Rica with a deep interest in mission and made strenuous efforts from the start to learn Spanish.

In the course of the following decade, the mission efforts of both groups began to bear fruit. But in



Map from 1997 calendar of the Mennonite churches of Costa Rica

1985 a division within the Kleine Gemeinde group left them depleted of members and leadership. Recognizing their shared commitment to basic Anabaptist doctrines and a mutual passion for missions, the two groups agreed to merge. Today, the flourishing settlement has ten congregations and nearly 500 active participants, some 60% of whom are native Costa Ricans.

One measure of the community's vitality is the energetic work of the Publicadora La Merced, a publication outreach that prints and distributes Spanish-language materials throughout Central and South America. In addition to printing several locally-produced tracts and booklets, La Merced translates and publishes curriculum material for use in parochial schools, a periodical for teachers, and a devotional magazine entitled *La Antorcha de la Verdad*, with a bi-monthly circulation of nearly 30,000 copies. According to Duane Nisly—a Hutchinson, Kansas native who has lived in Costa Rica for more than a decade as a pastor and the administrator of the press—some 1,700 copies of *La Antorcha* are sent regularly to Cuba, where the hunger for Anabaptist literature finds testimony in the dozens of letters the press has received from small Christian communities there.

But another type of vitality might also be read in the wide variety of family names and accents that one encounters in the local congregations. To an amazing degree, Beachy Amish, Kleine Gemeinde and Costa Ricans alike are bridging long-standing cultural, historical and linguistic divides. Even more remarkable, they seem to have successfully hurdled the single biggest obstacle to cross-cultural relations: marriage. For nearly two decades, members of both the Beachy Amish and the Kleine Gemeinde groups have married into Costa Rican families; now following the merger of the two denominations, they have also begun marrying each other. "It is impossible to expect people to function at a church level," said Philip Yoder, who came to Costa Rica as a teenager and is now a bishop of the congregation in Santa Rita, "if at marriage we draw the line and say 'no further'." But in the next breath, Yoder readily

La Mizpa church

La Merced church, Sanford Yoder (bishop), Luis Carvajal (deacon), Carlos Alfaro

acknowledged that the past decade has not been without cross-cultural tensions. "The Kleine Gemeinde people have been extremely gracious," he said. "They have made a very conscious and deliberate effort to fit in." Reuben Dueck, a deacon at the La Estrella congregation, said much the same thing about the Beachy Amish, though he also noted that at times the cultural adjustments in marriage or cooperative church work were greater between the two ethnic Anabaptist groups than they were with the Costa Ricans.

One key to the success of this effort has been a shared commitment to learn Spanish. This may seem like an obvious point, but traditionally the identity of both immigrant groups had been closely linked to their German dialects as one of the "boundary markers" that helped to separate them as a gathered church from the "fallen world." Although some families may continue to speak English or German at home, Spanish is now clearly established as the public language of school, church and business; and for most of the young people, Spanish is the language of choice.

Yet despite these successes, the challenges of cross-cultural communication and equality of power still persist. For example, even though the community has made a conscious effort at leadership training, Yoder acknowledges that the number of Costa Ricans in positions of executive leadership is still disproportionately small. And he worries that some of the newer Costa Rican converts may be attracted to the church as much by stereotypical assumptions about North American power and money as by the gospel. Dale Heisey, pastor of the Marsella congregation, expressed similar concerns. "We struggle with the question of when to baptize," he said. "The Great Commission

Publicadora La Merced office

calls us not only to preach the gospel but also to teach new converts to 'observe all things.'"

For groups such as the Beachy Amish and the Kleine Gemeinde, which have traditionally maintained clear boundaries with the surrounding culture and have practiced various forms of church discipline, questions of external practice and form take on new meaning in a cross-cultural context. "We have tried to steer away from freezing our Ordnung or discipline," said Yoder, "and yet we don't want to be casual about the changes we introduce." Thus, although plain dress is required of all members, the group no longer insists that men wear suspenders, and they quickly discovered that black stockings for women were simply too impractical given the ubiquitous mud during the rainy season. They also simplified the style of the prayer veiling so that Costa Rican women who were not accustomed to sewing their own clothes could make their veilings with little trouble or expense.

Still, some traditional elements are unmistakable. At church on Sunday morning, plainly-dressed worshipers seat themselves, separated by gender, in straight bench pews. The hymns may have been translated into Spanish, but they are still sung at a mournful pace to familiar gospel tunes in four-part harmony; and the Sunday School in the cement-floor basement—with its curtain dividers, chalkboards and flannel-graph easels—would be immediately familiar to anyone who grew up in a conservative Mennonite church in the U.S. "People look at us as conservative," Yoder reflected. "And conservatism, of course, is supposedly a detriment to our outreach. Yet we feel that it is actually a great advantage. People looking in from the outside see us as clearly different from the world."

At the same time, Yoder also acknowledged that the boundaries between the church and the world are constantly in flux. In no other area is this more evident than in economic issues like labor, wealth and materialism. While most members from a Beachy Amish or Kleine Gemeinde background are not rich, their cultural patterns of work discipline, family-based investment strategies, and connections to overseas markets have tended to create significant differences in wealth and power between them and their Costa Rican brothers and sisters. During the 1980s, for example, one Mennonite-owned chicken processing plant grew very rapidly to the point where it employed the majority of the local population and dominated the economy of the region. When tensions began to emerge between factory managers and workers—the majority of whom were Costa Ricans—they inevitably found expression within the local congregation as well. In the early 1990s, church leadership began to regard the factory as an impediment to evangelization, and they asked the factory owner to scale back production or to sell his factory. When he refused, a painful split ensued within the church.

"For many years we struggled just to survive economically," said Yoder. "We are now entering a phase when our congregations are beginning to feel the pressures of materialism that the churches in the States have long had to face. If we are not careful, we will also become part of a rat-race that destroys our vision and purpose and commitment to Christ." Yoder compared financial resources with a medication he recently gave his cows for parasites. Used for a definite purpose and in a limited dosage, the medication serves a necessary purpose. But too much will kill the cow. According to Yoder, "The health of our church depends on active mutual disciplining in the congregation. Being a Christian is not a theory; it's a life."

The future of this cross-cultural Costa Rican Mennonite community—and its delicate amalgam of different ethnicities, languages, and customs—is uncertain. But if it continues to thrive, says Yoder, "we will need to maintain a clarity about biblical principles applied in daily life without falling into a legalism that is culturally-bound." Recalling the words of Albert Dueck, a much-loved Kleine Gemeinde leader who died in 1996, Yoder concluded: "Albert always used to counsel us to be careful about systems. Building the church is following Christ. In every situation, Christ needs to be brought as a fresh breath of life. That's what we're trying to do here in Costa Rica."

The Dream of the Self as a "Community of Memory": Jeff Gundy and the Ancestral Voices

A Review Essay

by Ami Regier

Jeff Gundy, *A Community of Memory: My Days with George and Clara.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996. Pp. 158. ($14.95—paperback) ISBN 0-252-06496-8

This is a book for birthright Mennonites who try to hear the ancestors speaking even though they may have heard what modern theorists say: that the past isn't fully knowable, and that origins are not the only source of identity. In *A Community of Memory: My Days with George and Clara*, Jeff Gundy gives voice to the elusive past with nostalgia and ambivalence. Gundy, a poet and a professor of English at Bluffton College, wrote the work as a series of researched, fictionalized first-person narratives from the perspective of various ancestors through time. Technically a historical study in a literary form, the work presents the self, the "I," as a gift from history, always in the process of emerging from the voices of the past. At the same time, however, Gundy's work problematizes the pleasure of such wishful thinking. By developing a form reminiscent of a William Faulkner or Louise Erdrich novel, Gundy puts the aesthetic and textual processes of reclaiming family and church history front and center: namely, the necessary ventriloquism of each voice, and the necessary invention within recovery. This aesthetic problem governs the text's structure. Each voice is presented as a fragment, as if to show that the ancestral voice cannot be sustained forever, and to suggest that the past itself is accessible only in fragments. Then, in the intimacy of italics, a fictional author intrudes, sometimes in the middle and sometimes at the end of a section, with all the marvelous interruptive energy of the narrator in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, or Coleridge's dreamer attempting to recover the past in "Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream, A Fragment."

How does it all add up? My overall reading is as ambivalent as the work: on the one hand, this historical novel presents the contemporary descendent as the site of diverse voices from the past, in order to represent a community in terms of its differences and multiplicity, and thus opens up our representations of a past community often perceived in overly-unified terms. On the other hand, there is a strongly nostalgic impulse to show more harmony and unity in the community, and between the past and present, than the form would seem to support. The title of the text implies the successful coming together of text, self, history, community, and family. The phrase "a community of memory" has an assertion in it, a speech act that approaches a directive that "makes it so" in the saying. This would be fine and good if it could do so while maintaining the notion of diversity within, but for me, the speaking voices of *A Community of Memory* become holistically united into one "I". Whereas the monologues of Faulkner's and Erdrich's characters become fascinating because of the profoundly different views of family history each character sees even within the same political and emotional context, the ancestors in Gundy's narratives see the world quite similarly, or find ways to assimilate themselves into a communal view.

Gundy grapples with the problem head on, on a number of levels. For example, he knows that his ancestors want to be part of the landscape he describes at one point in the text as part of the speechlessness of the midwestern landscape. The community Gundy re-entered was "die Stillen im Lande," a community that tended to avoid confessional revelations of their lives:

> *I had thought of these people as both gossipy and reticent, snoopy and reluctant to talk about their feelings, parochial and unambitious, whiling away their lives between work, church, and high school athletic events. I had been assuming that my path was taking me steadily away from them and that I would be happier the farther that I got. But it struck me then that I was extremely lucky to belong among them, not only for the material security of my youth but also for the vision I had inherited from those years of how people might actually live together in something approaching harmony. I saw them as having somehow worked out a way of life that included both community and privacy.*
>
> *It seemed to me then that the lives of loyalty, steadiness, and faith that I'd seen these people trying at least to live were a fortunate conjunction of centuries of religious experience with some weird, still emerging prairie aesthetics, born of the flatness and blandness of our native terrain and our century plus of modest prosperity upon it, something that only Easterners and city folks would dismiss as merely boring, although it is that too. I'd seen that it was possible to sit in a room with strangers as they talked earnestly and even with goodwill about their seamiest secrets and mine. But I was glad then to be back among people who, before they'd have done such a thing, would have stripped themselves naked and come to church painted blue of a Sunday morning. [120]*

Gundy is relieved to have come from a reticent community, and Gundy's voices stay a little on the safe side. The "weird, still emerging prairie aesthetics" in all their wonderful flatness require understatement, and yet should ancestors be trusted when they claim there were no scandals or that reticence was not a form of repression? As a reader, and a faculty member at a Mennonite college, I want to know how to look at the past in order to have more voices in dialogue. I'm concerned that Gundy's text lets us all off the hook a little too soon. I'm haunted by the stories that still come out at funerals about the scandals of unkindness (from a late twentieth-century perspective) in my family's church past that may well have been invented, but tremendously affected some lives to the degree that the stories outlived the persons. The writer-narrator in this text appears happy to have not run across any scandals in the past, yet I think I share George's concern at one point about the potential for "papering over" the past, because it does apply particularly well to a historical study:

> Yes, we had all kinds of contentions in those meetings, though as good Mennonites of course most of the time we agreed and praised each other to death on the surface. Even when we did get flat-out angry at the committee meetings, we generally papered it all over and tried to keep a brave face up for the people. [122]

The "community of memory" itself can paper over the past, and this paper publication certainly faces that risk. Because of that risk, the most compelling areas of the text are the dialogues between the unknowable content of the past and the self. This kind of writing in the text has a greater emotional and textural range than the declarations of ancestors. The voices of the ancestors are not nearly as interesting as the multiple registers of the voice of the writer-narrator. One segue from Jacob Gundy's story into the story of the narrator searching for Jacob's land shows the narrator getting lost while driving around on what may be the ancestral homeland. The tone ranges from the deeply elegiac to wry, prosaic irreverence:

I felt a rush of emotion as I stood there, on land that had quite probably been—for a tiny fragment of its long and speechless existence—a street where my great-great-grandparents had walked. Perhaps here had been a store where they had bought nails and sugar and pants, gone back now to some state not quite natural but nearly so. Somewhere within a half mile was the land they had farmed for the better part of a half century. For a moment the place seemed soft and inviting to me, ready to welcome one of its grandchildren home, to provide me with a living that would have nothing to do with money.

Of course it was also hotter than the hubs of hell, and I didn't know exactly where Jacob's place had been. I was tempted to follow a lane that led back to the northwest, but instead I took some pictures, soaked up the atmosphere for a few minutes more, and got back into my air-conditioned car. [82]

I do find Gundy's entrance into history in a literary form a compelling and important project. The literary medium lets the project have some pleasures and even some limits a more traditional historicist approach could not have:

Much gets lost, no matter what we do. What we can salvage, piece together, reclaim, darned across the holes and thin spots, is not a whole story, not a complete set of answers to our questions. It won't give us a foundation safe from any tornado or earthquake, or a set of beliefs that no trial or disaster can shake. It won't provide a final, conclusive way of thinking about this stubbornly beautiful and terrible world.

But whatever our stance toward the world, it finally rests on one set of assumptions or another. We can choose one ready-made or try as Blake did to avoid that bondage by inventing our own, although that task is not for the fainthearted or the merely brilliant. Sooner or later, whatever our intelligence or our learning, we find our limits: we have no more hope of understanding whatever in the universe is more complicated than we are than rabbits have of understanding us. [153]

Although the writer-narrator here argues for the acceptance of limits, based on lessons learned from the past, and itself is not a Blakean work of an imagined, changed world, there is a hint of an invitation for such inventions. However unfairly in the context of one book rooted in a particular family, I find myself thinking of the needs of the larger Mennonite present: the community is expanding, it is far more diverse than ever in college and international settings, and by numbers may no longer be centered in birthright origins. I would like to call for works that further the artistic and historical problematic that Gundy entered in *A Community of Memory*. "Memory" by itself may not offer quite the right description, however; the current needs are for "communities of stories" to create a living, inhabitable heritage with a wider scope. Gundy's text just begins the conversation between a storied past and present.

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Poetry

Naomi Reimer

Coincidence

In the dead-of-night quiet
only Papa heard the cyclone,
his large ears, sails set
to catch a wind. He hurried
us into the cellar before
a storm blew out two windows.

Adept at matching time and place,
Papa concealed the gift, pacing
hat in hand, leaving quickly to find
an old Mennonite waiting in the rain
for a ride, or a daughter in a Kansas
nursing school planning an elopement.

Nine decades ago his mother moaned him
toward light while across the Washita
a hundred Arapahoes chanted and danced.
Now in a nursing home he hears one chant
for a Lummi lamed in a woods, a song
to inspirit his traverse—his final birth.

On Learning Solitude

Run alone, a scarecrow girl in an older
sister's handed down everyday dress.
At table, eat cabbage soup, fried noodles,
calling them kjielkje, but except for food
speak English—concealing the Plautdietsch.
Afternoons hide in an upstairs hall corner
next to a bookcase, read *Little Women*
four times, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*,
Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*—
not understanding the words, only knowing
the thunder of the lines like the shudder
and roar circling the house all one lightning
infested night, illumination coming and going,
mysterious, random—the terrible voice of God.

Alder

If one could see inside,
I am told, the rings
in the trunk of an alder
though concentric are not equal.
Layered year after year
through dry seasons and wet,
they pattern the weather,
the orbits of the moon.

Those rings are eccentric,
each tree with a print of its own.
Underneath the light smooth skin
there's an indentation
where the longest summer shining,
first touched that bark,
and another where it touched it last,
before leaving it to the dark.

Book Reviews

Richard C. Anderson, *Peace Was in Their Hearts*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996. Pp. 279. ($17.99—paperback) ISBN 0-8361-9053-X

A four year veteran of CPS and a successful businessman, teacher, and church officer, Richard C. Anderson wrote this book about World War II conscientious objectors (COs), according to his first paragraph, in order to explain what the COs did and, more importantly, why they did it. The book is both a general description of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) system and also a passionate apology for pacifism and a condemnation of war. Overall, Anderson's book may be seen as a useful contribution to the literature on modern American pacifism as long as the reader understands what the book is, and also what it is not.

This book has some marked areas of strength. Anderson has rooted himself in many of the standard historical and ethical treatments of contemporary pacifism. Even more importantly, Anderson sent out a detailed questionnaire to all the surviving CPS veterans he could locate. Out of this initial 3000 individuals, he received over a thousand replies, many of them offering thoughtful and detailed reminiscences of CPS. In numerous sections of his book, Anderson has arranged extensive quotes from these questionnaires in a way that makes them appear to be engaged in interesting conversation with each other around organized topics: why they went to CPS, the reactions they received from friends, family, and the public, their critiques of the system, how it changed their lives, and the like.

In the middle section of the book, Anderson sketches out, in example after example likewise heavily laced with quotes from his respondents, how the CPS experience subsequently affected the life choices and courses of these men. Through this approach, Anderson has altogether provided a general overview of the CPS system: where it came from, what it tried to do, and where it failed. He is particularly articulate on this last point. Throughout the text, the author's perspective emerges: he bleeds with admiration and sympathy for his fellow COs, but remains bitterly angry at the government who fostered the system and the church officials who administered it. He closes the book with the last three chapters devoted to a general description and analysis of the reasoning for conscientious objection and a general apology for pacifism and a condemnation of war. This section proceeds primarily in the realm of ethical and political reasoning; the author recognizes but by and large downplays religious and particularly Christian denunciations of war. In sum, however, for the reader unfamiliar with either pacifism or the CPS system, this book could serve as a fair general introduction. As long as one refers to it for no other purpose, it has a real contribution to make.

Yet the book has a number of areas of weakness which limit its usefulness in other ways. First, Anderson has relied upon his questionnaires too much and too uncritically, never considering the effects of nostalgia or the natural human tendency to confuse hindsight with historical accuracy. Moreover, the author confidently asserts (p. 41) that the questionnaires are the only source available to provide any insight into the thinking of CPS men. Apparently he has overlooked the works by historians such as Mitchell Robinson, Cynthia Eller, and Theodore Grimsrud, who were able to uncover all sorts of other insights into the thinking of CPS men, including their correspondence and their camp

newsletters. One wishes that Anderson had paid a few visits to archives and reviewed some of this other material.

Secondly, the historical usefulness of the book is greatly limited because of the author's consistent reliance upon broad, vague generalities. Here is an analysis that cries out for specific examples. We learn, for instance, that section 5(g) of the 1940 draft law (but nothing on its origins or pressures behind its creation) had an emphasis on civilian work, and "the peace church negotiators" thought this was the best they could get. Yet the author neglects to mention any particular names of the negotiators. Henry Fast appears in the book once, Paul C. French twice, and H. S. Bender and Orie Miller not at all. Pacifist agencies like NSBRO are mentioned in passing, but not MCC or AFSC. We learn that "some religious groups were concerned about exposing their young men to non-Christian influences." One can suppose that Anderson is referring to Mennonites here because this was a major issue for conservative Mennonite groups especially, but we can only suppose this because he doesn't name these groups or analyze their concerns.

Thirdly, the text suffers because of what can only be described as a breakdown in editing. The text lacks direction; no structure is apparent as Anderson shifts from topic to topic and sometimes back again with only a vague sense of purpose. Likewise he shifts tenses from past to present, sometimes in the same sentence. Numerous times the author fails to provide citations for his assertions. Moreover, better editing would have helped the author refrain from the regrettable practice of including numerous large block quotes, some of them running for two or three pages; much of the book is little more than block quotes pasted together by a short paragraph or two of analysis and transitions. One is left wondering why Herald Press would publish a book but invest so little care in its presentation or editing.

In sum, for the new reader engaged in some general reading into 20th century American pacifism, Anderson's work could serve as a fairly useful introduction. Yet the more serious historian, searching for more detailed scholarly treatments of the subject, would be better off looking elsewhere.

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Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Women against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947.* Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp. 180. ($15.95-paperback). ISBN 0-8078-4672-4

It has taken many years for the women's role in World War II to be duly recognized. Even today some might demand further and fuller recognition. If the female contribution to the American war effort to defeat the Axis powers has not been given enough attention, one can expect complete silence on the subject of women conscientious objectors during those years. This book reminds us of a small group of women in World War II who, like some 12,000 men, dared to defy patriotic public opinion and declared themselves to be against the war for religious and/or moral reasons.

For some time we have known the story of a number of World War II female conscientious objectors. Waltner Goossen includes many more women, but she confines her study to those who were somehow connected or identified with the Civilian Public Service Camps. Her work is based upon a vast amount of unpublished and published materials. Among the former are the results of twenty-seven oral interviews and replies to 153 questionnaires. In the first two chapters the author discusses what one might call women's peace education, federal provisions for conscientious objectors, and public opinion towards the latter. She points out that most women received their peace education in families that rejected war as an instrument for resolving conflict. Such was the case in many Mennonite, Quaker and Brethren homes.

However, it is regrettable the interviews and questionnaires did not tell us more about women's peace education. We would have liked to learn more about the role of parents and church in passing on the peace tradition in these homes. Was it the father or mother or both who taught peace or was it perhaps a grandparent who reminded the new generation of the family's and church's stance on war and peace? Was peace primarily taught to the males in the home and church because they might some day be subject to the military conscription, and did females in the household accidentally "absorb" the peace message? Did parents and grandparents use many family or faith stories to underscore their

message? For instance, did Mennonites refer to the Mennonite exodus from Russia in 1874 or immigration from Europe in the 19th century in order to escape military service as examples of their faithfulness to nonresistance?

One also wonders about the impact of women peace activists in the American peace movement from c. 1900 to 1941. During this time many women such as Jane Addams, Emily Balch, Dorothy Day, Jeanette Rankin, and others played a very important role in the American peace movement. They had shown that although biologically or otherwise women are not any more peace loving than men, they were able to articulate peace concerns and organize for peace. How many World War II female conscientious objectors were influenced by Addams, Day, et al? Furthermore, the decade of the 1930s, a period of very strong peace activism on many university and college campuses, might have affected many students at any of the Historic Peace Churches' related colleges. On the Bethel campus alone many students might have been influenced by Emmet and Eva Harshbarger. At Goshen College, Guy Hershberger must have had some impact on his students. In fact, World War II women conscientious objectors' peace education might have been similar to that of the author's in the 1970s and 1980s.

Whatever motivated or determined women to become conscientious objectors, they were tested. Unlike their British sisters, American women were not drafted in World War II. What if there had been conscription of women? Would female members of the traditional Historic Peace Churches have responded the same as or differently from male draftees? But, as we will see below, American female conscientious objectors were tested in many other ways.

Waltner Goossen discusses in some detail the option under the law for drafted conscientious objectors. They were allowed to do civilian work of "national importance" in Civilian Public Service Camps. Much of the work consisted of soil conservation, smoke jumping, etc. Later the men were permitted to work in mental hospitals or to offer themselves as guinea pigs for all sorts of research. World War II civilian alternatives for conscientious objectors were a considerable improvement over World War I options. Also public opinion was a bit more tolerant, but most conscientious objectors, male and female, still encountered and experienced much hostility and ridicule. As in all wars, they constituted a small, barely-tolerated subculture.

Chapters three and four contain the most important pages of the book. In the former the author discusses the experiences of some fifteen-hundred women who from 1941 to 1947 joined their husbands or fiancés near Civilian Public Camp settings. This a very moving story of women, many of whom had children, struggling to maintain their marriages, enduring financial hardships, and often experiencing ostracism and local hostility. Many of these women found local employment while others, some 15 percent, were hired to serve in CPS camps. Yet, as the author reminds us, their hardships were no greater than those of servicemen's spouses. One wonders how well today's marriages would handle the stress and strain of such experiences. In World War II divorce was not considered such an acceptable option as it is today. One is impressed and moved by the commitment of these World War II "camp followers." They were truly tested.

In addition to spouses and fiancées, were a number of women who served in CPS camps as dietitians, matrons, etc. and several who volunteered as nurses in various hospitals. It was during this time that the Mennonite Nurses' Association was formed. Many women and men conscientious objectors were also interested in doing overseas relief work but were barred from doing so by a hostile Congress. They and others would have to wait until the postwar era. Many college women did volunteer their services to work in mental hospitals where they joined male conscientious objectors. Together they helped to revolutionize care for the mentally ill.

The last chapter discusses the aftermath of the war; the agonizingly slow demobilization of conscientious objectors—some of whom were not allowed to go home until early 1947—a return to normal civilian life, passing peace concerns on to their children, etc.

Unfortunately, we do not learn if many of these World War II female conscientious objectors were very active in post-war peace movements. Were any active in the anti-Vietnam war movement, the Women's Strike for Peace, or Nuclear Freeze?

After the war most women wanted to forget their World War II experiences, although they would often seek and maintain contact with alumnae. Because of their reticence and the failure of church and other organizations to recognize their role in the war, their story would remain

largely untold. Now we know much more about their experiences thanks to this slender but well-researched important contribution to World War peace literature. It is a good story of faith and marital commitment.

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Marvin E. Kroeker, *Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains: A. J. and Magdalena Becker and the Post Oak Mission*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1997. Pp. 177. ($19.95 — paperback) ISBN 0-921788-42-8

Marvin Kroeker's new book *Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains* not only fills an important chapter in the history of Mennonites in America, it also addresses issues intimately related to the relationship between Mennonites and American culture. This study also has important implications for Mennonite identity, and our understanding of missions in the context of that identity.

On one level this is a history of the Mennonite Brethren mission efforts among the Comanche Indians in Southwestern Oklahoma. At its heart, it is an intimate portrait of a woman, Magdalena Becker, and the profound impact that one person, filled with love for people and a desire to help them endure and overcome their suffering, can have in a situation rife with conflict and despair.

Kroeker clearly demonstrates that the twenty-eight years (1904-1932) that Magdalena Becker served as "field matron" at the Kiowa Indian Agency, represent the foundation of Mennonite Brethren efforts. All other roles, that of Heinrich Kohfeld the first missionary to the Comanche, and even that of her husband A.J. Becker, pale in comparison to the tireless service rendered by this pioneer of Mennonite missions.

This study should cause us to stop and consider the dynamics of conversion, and the process through which the gospel enters the lives of people. It should also challenge our understanding of the role of women, not only in missions but also in the practice of religion in general. For, alongside Magdalena Becker, the stars of this story are the Comanche women who responded to the gospel as Magdalena Becker shared it through her words and deeds.

The story of the Mennonite Brethren mission among the Comanche is, and should be, a painful story. Mistakes were made, relationships were broken beyond repair. The eminent American church historian Martin Marty writes, "Whenever latter-day Americans are thoughtful about their past, the Indian story becomes central to their self-understanding." The story told in this book stands as an important chapter in the Mennonite quest for self-understanding.

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"A Tribute to John Howard Yoder." *Faith and Freedom: A Journal of Christian Ethics*, vol. 5, no. 1-2 (June 1996). Edited by Philip Matthews, David Neville, Andrew Curtis. Published by Baptist Peace Fellowship of Australia and Baptist Inner City Ministries. (Faith and Freedom, PO Box 173, Bentley, WA 6102, Australia). Pp. 72. ISSN 1038-9865

Much like his theological mentor, Karl Barth, who looked on in horror as "Barthian" theologians emerged, so too has John Howard Yoder eschewed the cultivation of disciples. Nevertheless, "Yoderian" theologians have sprung up and continue to spring up, guaranteeing that Yoder's forceful, distinctive voice will continue to resonate in the theological world long after he stops publishing.

But while Yoder continues to make disciples and to provoke those unconvinced by his positions to reformulate their own, a thorough critical appraisal of Yoder's work is, as of now, lacking. The collection of essays under review, gathered for an Australian ethics journal as a tribute to Yoder, is one step towards filling this scholarly lacuna.

Yoder's scholarship has covered an amazing breadth of subject matter, from Reformation studies to Biblical interpretation, from social ethics to theology to reflections on philosophical hermeneutics. The authors of these essays interact with Yoder's contribution to these fields, with the exception of Reformation history.

Yoder is most famous for his work in Christian ethics, and in this collection several essayists engage this work. Ian Barns shows how Yoder's work, often unfairly characterized as "sectarian," can be used in the construction of a "public theology" in the Australian context. Stanley

Hauerwas, whose intellectual debt to Yoder is great, has already written much about Yoder. What stands out in his short piece here is his recognition that he often writes "against the nations" whereas Yoder writes "for the nations." This means that Yoder has fewer qualms about appropriating for Christian purposes such words as "freedom" and "justice" than does Hauerwas, who fears that they are too tainted by liberalism to be of much use. Because Hauerwas is more widely read than Yoder and their names have become intertwined, it is important that such differences in style as well as substance be noted. Marva Dawn presents a comparison of Yoder and Jacques Ellul on the question of the "principalities and powers," while David Neville deconstructs C. S. Lewis' critique of Christian pacifism, much as Yoder did in the 1950s with Reinhold Niebuhr.

Glen Stassen and Christ Marshall continue work in biblical exegesis begun by Yoder. Stassen's essay deepens while confirming Yoder's reading of the political message of Luke's Gospel. Marshall examines Yoder's interpretation of Romans 13:4, asking whether or not the passage can be validly deployed in support of capital punishment. He concludes, with Yoder, that it cannot, although his argument differs in detail, if not in substance, from Yoder's.

Other writers take up the task of clarifying and extending Yoder's theological thought. In a very helpful article, Nancey Murphy outlines the "systematic" character of the theological thought undergirding Yoder's works. J. Denny Weaver looks at what Christology and the atonement might look like if the rejection of violence were made central to our understanding of them. He concludes that a "peace-shaped theology" must subject the Christological formulations of Nicea-Chalcedon to serious critique while reappropriating the Christus Victor theory of the atonement as more adequate. Weaver's positive appraisal of Christus Victor is in line with Yoder's understanding of "Christ, Our Conquering Lamb," although Yoder finds less of a disjunction between the classic creeds and a "peace-shaped theology" than does Weaver. Michael Cartwright uses Yoder's work as a springboard from which to launch a discussion of the relationship of hope and potential appropriations of the martyr tradition today. Cartwright's article is of particular interest for *Mennonite Life* readers in that he takes Mel Goering to task for his "cynical" review of Jim Juhnke's play "Dirk's Exodus," in these pages (Dec. 1992 issue).

Finally, in the realm of philosophical hermeneutics, Mark Nation compares Yoder's notion of the community-dependence of all theological reflection with literary theorist Stanley Fish's concept of interpretive communities. Yoder, Nation argues, offers the postmodern Christian a way through and beyond relativism.

This collection of essays is both a fitting tribute to Yoder and a significant extension of his thought. It has not, however, exhausted the possible avenues for a critical appraisal of Yoder. For example, the influence of Barth on many of Yoder's key themes has not been studied in detail. Also missing from the collection are thorough discussions of Yoder's ecclesiology, pneumatology, and place in the development of Anabaptist historiography. Yoder's many friendly critics from across the Christian world also do not have a place in this collection. But these are gaps for future scholarship to fill—perhaps the planned *Festschrift* for Yoder will address some of them. In the meantime, those inspired, provoked, or flustered by Yoder's writings should be grateful for this quality collection of essays as further inspiration or provocation.

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