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Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology

Faith and politics

Editorial

Paul Doerksen

Coincidentally, I write this editorial introduction to an issue of *Vision* that addresses the topic of faith and politics just as the results of the November 2016 presidential election in the United States are announced. Hillary Clinton has conceded victory to now President-Elect Donald Trump. My reading of even a little bit of the commentary is an exercise in noticing the proliferation of hyperbolic adjectives, as pundits try to make sense of an "improbable presidential win," which has "shattered expectations and shaken the world," according to the front page of my local paper, the *Winnipeg Free Press*. And yet my description of these adjectives as hyperbolic would be challenged by others who might see nothing improbable about Trump's victory. In the midst of all the attention paid to this electoral process, it's hard to think that politics is about anything other than this kind of thing, and that faith within those politics is anything more than figuring out whom Christians should vote for. In a sense, this issue of *Vision* tries to show that the issues addressed in discussions of faith and politics are far more than analysis of conventional electoral power.

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Within the modern Western political tradition, it is most often taken as a given that church and state must remain separate. This notion has its roots in the work of such influential thinkers as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Hobbes. Such an understanding might be seen as a reaction to more than a millennium of Christendom, when church and secular authority worked in close relation to govern society.[1] This arrangement, heavily criticized and subsequently dismantled in Western society, has given way to the current post-Christendom era. It is within this post-Christendom era that Anabaptists have begun to contribute to a renewed

emphasis on the study and writing of political theology, a pursuit that according to ethicist Oliver O'Donovan seeks to shed light from the Christian faith on the intricate challenge of thinking about living in late modern Western society. If he is right, then we have many areas of thought to consider: judgment, the nature of freedom, the possibility and shape of public deliberation and communication, the role of power and coercive force, powers that any given institution should or should not have, the nature of representation, the nature and locus of authority, the role and form of punishment, sharing and husbanding of resources, what constitutes meaningful action in history, the intelligibility of suffering—just to name a few. And presumably, Anabaptists (and others, surely) want to think about these matters without making a case for hegemony of the church or theocracy, for the revival of Christendom or even the establishment of the church. Clearly we have much work ahead of us.

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This issue of *Vision* attempts to display how the ongoing task of shedding light from the Christian faith on the intricate challenge of living in our societies takes on a plurality of topics as well as several different forms. That is, this issue includes an essay that engages the formal, academic, theological and political writing of the late A. James Reimer. This essay, along with several others, fits the description of academic discourse, which is surely an important enterprise. And academic discourse itself is not of a piece; the essays that fit this description deal with issues such as public activism, the politics of gender, politics and education, and so on.

Several other pieces contribute to important ongoing conversation regarding Indigenous peoples. These include theological reflections on the nature and possibility of reconciliation. This issue also includes several sermons, indicating by their inclusion the significance of the church in any conversation that addresses Christian faith and politics. These sermons provide samples of the first-rate theological work that is carried on in church settings on an ongoing basis, as Christians grapple with making our way in

God's world. We have also included a blog post written by a seminary president, bringing to view the possibilities of thoughtful and timely contributions in a more informal medium.

I have also included a short list of selected resources. Any such list is necessarily idiosyncratic; nonetheless, I hope that it will be useful to readers of *Vision* who may wish to pursue further some of the matters raised here. On a personal note, I am grateful to the writers for their fine, thoughtful contributions. I have enjoyed the contact with each one. I am also grateful to the *Vision* editorial council for the opportunity to edit this issue, and especially to Barbara Nelson Gingerich for her patient and careful work. Thank you.

Note

[1] The term *Christendom* can describe a specific historical era in which the Christian church was identified with the whole of organized society, or the merging of the religious and political community. See R. W. Southern, *Western Society and Church in the Middle Ages* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), 16. As a concept, Christendom might be described as an attempt to take seriously the political nature of the church and its instrumental role in the salvation of the world. See William Cavanaugh, "Church," in *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. William Cavanaugh and Peter Scott (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 397. In Craig Carter's use of the term, Christendom is "a concept of Western civilization as having a religious arm (the church) and a secular arm (civil government), both of which are united in their adherence to Christian faith, which is seen as the so-called soul of Europe or the West." Craig Carter, *Rethinking "'Christ and Culture": A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 14.

About the editor

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Religious freedom
Civil liberty and divine gift

Cheryl Pauls

In recent years expressions of concern regarding erosions of religious freedom have intensified in various quarters of Canada and the United States.[1] This concern requires careful evaluation. It also invites exploration into the qualities of religious freedom for which the church yearns. Does the church perceive its imagination for exercising the divine gift of freedom in Christ to be waning, and see itself selling out to cultural trends? Or is it ill at ease with conditions in the public square that constrain its civil liberty?

Does the church perceive its imagination for exercising the divine gift of freedom in Christ to be waning, and see itself selling out to cultural trends? Or is it ill at ease with conditions in the public square that constrain its civil liberty?

This article takes shape in the conviction that those who follow Christ will always seek sound and resilient expressions of religious freedom in overlapping but not coalescing spheres of church and society. As I face apparent impasses and openings in these intersecting realms, I am persuaded that the church needs to be inspired by biblical stories that resist an ease of separation between religious and political realms. Thus, I begin in conversation with a story from the book of 1 Kings, which wades into waters of freedom as civil liberty and divine gift.[2] Inspired by the story, I call the church to exercise religious freedom in ways that sustain its capacity to generate wisdom.

Two prostitutes and a discerning king

> *Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.*

Wait. Later than what? In 1 Kings 3, it's just after God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what I should give you,"

and Solomon said, "An understanding mind, able to discern between good and evil." Then Solomon provided a feast for all his servants. Quite possibly his desire and action were seen as unusual.

And why identify the women as prostitutes? Sure, a good story needs to entice the listener, but it ought never to stoop to gratuitous defamation of character. The prostitute bit is peculiar, given that we are in the presence of a king with a questionable foreign affairs portfolio: Solomon loved many foreign women, and among his wives were 700 princesses and 300 concubines. Or perhaps it was remarkably subversive for the king to hear prostitutes in 970 BC. Was it in the wisdom of God that Solomon received those known to sell out in various matters of life, procreation included?

> *The one woman said, "Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne." But the other woman said, "No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours." The first said, "No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine." So they argued before the king.*
>
> *Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.' " So the king said, "Bring me a sword," and they brought a sword before the king. The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other."*

Wait. What do you think Solomon thought he was doing? Did he intend to follow through on his order and murder the baby

boy? Could he have known that he'd be stopped by someone with enough guts and mostly enough love to stand up to him and propose an alternative? Did he have another option up his sleeve?

The story doesn't tell us what was in Solomon's mind. Did he think killing innocent children, uttering murderous threats, and meting out pain in equal measure are wise and just ways to resolve disputes? The text simply acknowledges that Solomon's suggestion was refuted, after which the first woman is defined not as prostitute but as mother. We read,

> *But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—*
> *because compassion for her son burned within her—*
> *"Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!"*

Let's define Solomon's wisdom this way: he empowered the real mother to move from possessive, downward-spiraling, stalemate arguments—"No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine"—to clear witness to her true character. Make no mistake, though: this mother took an enormous risk. She released her own infant in order to save his life. She risked having people think she didn't care about keeping her baby. She risked being seen as the deceitful one. Most poignantly, in order to keep her child alive, she was willing to entrust her child to one she knew to be a baby thief and liar.

Let's define Solomon's wisdom this way: he empowered the real mother to move from possessive, stalemate arguments—"No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine"—to clear witness to her true character.

As the story opens, these women are called prostitutes. Most often this word defines a person, usually a woman, who accepts money for sexual services. Occasionally this word expresses judgment; it's a label for someone who sells out, who compromises the purity or good of a matter or person for the sake of personal or material gain. Sometimes people are even accused of "prostituting themselves" to enact grace: artists, athletes, and academics, among others, are charged with sacrificing their moral or artistic integrity—for omitting two-thirds of a soliloquy out of respect for an audience, or for acting out of ameliorative motivations to put in place differentiated accessibility standards in school and sport.

The second woman disrupts how the story unfolds. She refuses the first woman's offer of the warm, breathing boy. Why didn't she take him? After all, the premise of the story is her desire for this baby. Perhaps she couldn't bear the burden of indebtedness to the true mother; she was capable of theft but not of receiving grace. Her preferred option was to make things fair—uniformly horrific—for both women.

> *For she said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it."*

Solomon confronted two options. He could follow through on his original utterance, as affirmed by the second woman, or he could heed the first woman's plea and give the living baby to the second woman. He chose neither. Instead he said,

> *"Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother."*

Might we say that the wisdom of God flowed through Solomon as he discerned between two apparent forms of prostituting a mother's vocation? Did the second woman's despairing pain drive her to prostitute herself by calling for a violent form of equity rather than accepting a strangely wrought gift of new life? Did the true mother's despairing love compel her to prostitute her right and responsibility to raise the child through an extraordinary—though neither benevolent nor patronizing—offer of release and trust? And with Solomon's judgment, didn't the world see the courageous vulnerability of love exceed all reasonable definitions of grace and truth, finding expression as a tender power that would not only protect the child's life but transcend the charge of prostitution? For the text concludes,

Might we say that the wisdom of God flowed through Solomon as he discerned between two apparent forms of prostituting a mother's vocation?

> *All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.*

An exploration of the public vocation of the church

I hope that the church's fidelity to God's greatest commandment constantly disrupts and transforms what loyalty to God, enacted in love of God and neighbour, looks like when disjunctions emerge in the public square and the church. In that hope, I submit that the exercise of religious freedom will always risk eliciting accusations that some party is selling out. I also trust that God's wisdom continues to see through apparent forms of prostitution in our despairing compulsions—and everyday desires—to love and protect all the (and not only our fellow) creatures and callings with which we are entrusted. I pray that in its earnest desire to protect religious freedom as much as God's grace and truth in all things, the church today will see itself through the eyes of the mothers as it wades with me into an exploration this story from 1 Kings. As we venture in, I yearn most that categories of church and state be released from an easy identification of the former with the private realm and the latter with the public.

One often hears that over the past fifty years, growth of religious diversity and legal regulation surrounding individual rights has dramatically increased areas of potential overlap and conflict between law and religious practice.[3] Those who are convinced that religious freedom is eroding in the context of this overlap tend to share a perception that when Section 2a of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a bill of rights enshrined in Canada's constitution and guaranteeing fundamental freedoms of conscience and religion,[4] is in tension with equality rights defined in Section 15 of the charter,[5] adjudications favour the latter.

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The inclusion of religion and religious rights—and particularly the common substitute, "religious beliefs"—within a growing list of what is protected in the charter (and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, provincial human rights declarations, and commitments of voluntary organizations) is seen to be tantamount to reducing religion to one of many factors of identity vying for equal treatment under law rather than as a unique forum for discerning matters beyond its own interest.[6]

These critics point out that Canadian constitutional law seems to view religion as a private matter, and thereby to advance individual interest, even when religious faith is corporately embodied.[7] Religiously motivated variation from a mainstream ethos may be granted reasonable accommodation, provided little or no harm is likely to reach to those outside the protected population. The casualty in such determinations is a growing tendency to define religion as a special interest rather than a generative source of knowledge and wisdom.

Several religious communities in Canada seem to see a growing trend towards inclusive citizenship as entailing repudiation of "faith-based privilege."[8] I wonder, can this loss—perhaps a necessary outcome of movement into a post-Christendom society—enable the church to resist the privatization of religion and instead strengthen the common good of faith-based power? Such an understanding, I imagine, will be necessary for "the advancement of religion" to remain a purpose for which charitable status is afforded in Canada. More importantly, I consider this question vital to restoring a centring role for the church in civil society as a hub that enables ordinary citizens to exercise discernment.[9]

The trend towards inclusive citizenship seems to entail repudiation of faith-based privilege. Can this loss enable the church to resist the privatization of religion and instead strengthen the common good of faith-based power?

Phillip Blond, philosopher and Anglican theologian, discerns the presence of a similar phenomenon in England. Blond laments the flat, two-dimensional space of UK society today, in which imposed activities of the central state and the compulsion and determination of the marketplace are the only real players. He calls for increased influence of independent, autonomous mechanisms, including churches and universities, seeking to restore their competence to exercise power. This restoration would involve naming the church along with educational institutions and other non-direct governmental entities as at once both private and public: private in the sense of enabling agency apart from the state, and public in the sense of being players through which multisector common goods flow.

At a time of significant change in denominational designs, it may seem strange to consider the church capable of increased

agency in civil society. But I am persuaded that such changes in the church and elsewhere in society currently compel the church to risk being accused of prostituting itself, for the sake of protecting in love all that God entrusts to it.

Notes

[1] This article is informed by my reading of primarily Canadian constitutional and legal documents and discourse on law and religion through a lens of theological and political locatedness at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg; a study of American materials may or may not lead to similar inclinations.

[2] 1 Kings 3:16–28, NRSV.

[3] Richard Moon, "Introduction," in *Law and Religious Pluralism in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 2.

[4] The text of Section 2A of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms reads as follows:

> 2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
>
> (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
>
> (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
>
> (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
>
> (d) freedom of association.

See http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html.

[5] The text of Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms reads:

> **Equality before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law 15.**
>
> (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.
>
> **Affirmative action programs**
>
> (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

See http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html.

[6] Margaret H. Ogilvie, *Religious Institutions and the Law in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Law, 2010), 114.

[7] Benjamin L. Berger, "Law's Religion," in *Law and Religious Pluralism in Canada*, ed. Moon, 279.

[8] Lorraine E. Weinrib, "Ontario's Sharia Law Debate," in *Law and Religious Pluralism in Canada*, ed. Moon, 246.

[9] Phillip Blond, "There Is No Wealth but Life," in *Crisis and Recovery: Ethics, Economics and Justice*, ed. Rowan Williams and Larry Elliott (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 78.

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A call to arms

Sara Wenger Shenk

It is time for a call to arms. ***No, not the kind you think.***

Not the kind that has a Christian college president calling on students to arm themselves to "end those Muslims. . . ."

Not the kind that has presidential candidates and their devotees spewing violent rhetoric against Muslims, refugees, Mexicans, African Americans, homosexuals, and women.

Not the kind that stokes fear against all manner of perceived terror threat with calls to "carpet bomb [ISIS] into oblivion."

NO!

Rather, Mary's magnificent "call to arms" is an exaltation of praise:

> *"My soul magnifies the Lord,*
> *and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, . . .*
> *He has shown strength with his arm;*
> *he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.*
> *He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,*
> *and lifted up the lowly." (Luke 1:46, 51–52)*

A call that rings with the fearless joy born of resistance to despots in every age by those who stand firm within an alternative narrative, those who trust that "God's arm is not too short to save" (Isa. 59:1).

A call that knows true power lies with the powerless whom God uses over and over to turn the world around.

A call for those clad with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, wielding the most powerful of all swords—the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

It is time to end whatever complacency may have lulled us (persons of white privilege, for the most part) into a status quo stupor! Vitriol and hysteria are escalating daily with immediate

harm to refugees and to racial and religious minorities, many of whom are neighbors, co-workers, and family members.

When brutish power bares its ugly fangs, we finally see the demagoguery of our current reality through the prism of prophetic biblical calls for justice, and our spiritual imagination is called to high alert.

When despotic, brutish power bares its ugly fangs, things snap into focus—and we finally see. We see with a clarity that otherwise eludes those of us blinded by our privileged status. We see the demagoguery of our current reality through the prism of prophetic biblical calls for justice. And in seeing, our spiritual imagination is called to high alert.

In a *New York Times* op-ed column, "Finding Peace within the Holy Texts," David Brooks recalled the book *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*, by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. Brooks summarizes several insights from the book like this (my emphasis):

> *The great religions are based on love, and they satisfy the human need for community. But love is problematic. Love is preferential and particular. Love excludes and can create rivalries. Love of one scripture can make it hard to enter sympathetically into the minds of those who embrace another. . . .*
>
> *Read simplistically, the Bible's sibling rivalries seem merely like stories of victory or defeat—Isaac over Ishmael.* ***But all three Abrahamic religions have sophisticated, multilayered interpretive traditions that undercut fundamentalist readings****. . . .*
>
> *The reconciliation between love and justice is not simple, but for believers the texts, read properly, point the way. . . . The answer to religious violence is probably going to be found within religion itself, among those who understand that* ***religion gains influence when it renounces power****.*[1]

Imagine a world armed by Spirit-empowered learning communities, where followers of Jesus and spiritually starved fundamentalists, and even those with little faith can gather to learn the sacred texts, the deep wisdom that has emboldened countless

people to become truth tellers on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, the alien, and the stranger.

Imagine a world armed with the strong arms of those who link in solidarity as communities of faith—small, intense communities where people gather and together find strength to stand firm in a counternarrative about "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

Imagine a world armed by communities with joyful chutzpah who extend their arms to provide shelter to the homeless and the refugee, and who gladly sit at table with Muslims, Buddhists, and others who want to better understand our common humanity and desire to live at peace.

Imagine a world where small, local bands of Jesus followers move out from the security of church pews into the world—reaching out with sturdy arms of love to touch the earth gently, peacefully, with kindness and justice for all people and all creation.

So Yes—may we all present arms raised in praise, rejoicing in God our Saviour, whose strong arms lift up the lowly and guide our feet in the way of peace.

Note

[1] David Brooks, "Finding Peace within the Holy Texts," *New York Times*, November 17, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/17/opinion/finding-peace-within-the-holy-texts.html?_r=0.

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Shaping a more honest Anabaptist political theology
A consideration of the work of A. James Reimer

Darrell Winger

The political theology of Mennonite A. James Reimer is significant for those in the Anabaptist tradition and in the broader Christian community who give thought to how Anabaptists today can relate in an authentic and theologically informed way to the political-social contexts in which we find ourselves.

Jim Reimer's career spanned forty-five years. He served as a member of the faculty at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario, from 1978 until his retirement in 2008. He had many theological and academic interests, but political theology was a dominant area of research in the latter years of his career. Essential pieces of Reimer's scholarship have recently been published posthumously in *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology: Law, Order, and Civil Society*.[1] Reimer's contribution to political-theological discussion in the contemporary Anabaptist church is important and necessary: he had a clear commitment to Anabaptism while addressing what he perceived to be the tradition's lack of theological rationale for engagement in politics and providing an account of the positive, purposeful place of the civic order and its institutions. He contended that Anabaptist thought about the political realm must move from a posture of suspicion to one of affirmation.

A. James Reimer had a clear commitment to Anabaptism while addressing what he perceived to be the tradition's lack of theological rationale for engagement in politics and providing an account of the positive place of the civic order and its institutions.

A quest for a more honest political theology

Of course, Reimer is not alone among Anabaptists in his view of the importance of the civic order. Ronald J. Sider writes, "Human experience proves that politics profoundly impacts billions of

people. Bad political choices lead to dictatorship, starvation, and death for hundreds of millions. Good political decisions nurture freedom, life, justice and peace. Politics matters."[2] Reimer would certainly agree with Sider and other Anabaptists affirming the value of politics. For Reimer, political involvement is not only an important aspect of living out a faithful Christian witness; it is unavoidable. Reimer's desire is to challenge the notion that a faithful church can somehow stand apart from engaging the civic order. "Those who deny the legitimacy of such engagement are being dishonest; they engage with every facet of their lives, whether consciously or not. In our daily lives, whether we like it or not, we are all deeply enmeshed in multiple layers of civil (cultural, economic, and political) society."[3]

While there is little doubt that North American Anabaptists have become significantly involved directly and indirectly in the sociopolitical arena, Reimer contends that Anabaptists have not done the kind of theological work that would ground such activity. In particular, he calls for work that affirms the positive place of civic authority and encourages engagement in the legal-political-governmental apparatus. What is needed is "a more honest theology of law and civil institutions and their function in helping shape and preserve human and nonhuman life in a fallen world, as mandated by the Christian doctrines of creation, redemption, and reconciliation."[4] Since institutions within a civic order are ordained of God and necessary for the proper functioning of our common life, we should affirm them and approach them in a supportive manner.

Reimer contends that what is needed is "a more honest theology of law and civil institutions and their function in helping shape and preserve human and nonhuman life in a fallen world, as mandated by the Christian doctrines of creation, redemption, and reconciliation."

But this contention may seem to be at variance with traditional Anabaptist theology, which largely ignores the civic order, its institutions, and their functioning, and does not adequately address our necessary interaction with these institutions. For a large portion of the Anabaptist community, "the church is understood not in a universal, comprehensive sense, but as a small group of believers visibly gathered from out of the larger culture and society. In this view, how God governs

the world 'outside the perfection' of Christ remains largely unaddressed."[5] This gap in Anabaptist thought has created an ambivalence among many Anabaptists who believe that a primary focus of discipleship is being a faithful member of the church yet are aware that we function mostly within the context of broader society on a regular basis. Reimer argues:

> *When social ethics are positioned exclusively within or derived from a discussion of the doctrine of the church, as found in most Mennonite confessions of faith and virtually all Mennonite theologizing, there is a problem: the true theological significance of "God-ordained" institutions throughout human history, by which God preserves the world from total chaos and disintegration, is not adequately understood or acknowledged.*[6]

Reimer points out the obvious: the church is not the sole context for faithful Christian service. In fact, Anabaptist Christians undertake many positive and God-honoring activities outside our life in the church. Reimer questions the stark duality expressed in what is known as the Schleitheim confession, an articulation of Anabaptist principles endorsed by a group of early Anabaptist leaders meeting in 1527 in Schleitheim, Switzerland. Reimer writes: "The distinction between those 'inside the perfection of Christ' and those 'outside the perfection of Christ' may be a helpful theological way of signaling where our ultimate allegiances lie, but when used to draw bold and rigid lines between church and world this duality obfuscates the concrete world in which our lives actually take place."[7]

Embracing a common space

To resolve this gap in our theologizing and dispel the ambivalence resulting from it, Reimer seeks to shape a political theology that is more honest. Rather than view life within and beyond the church using the traditional lens of Schleitheim, he introduces an alternative framework, distinguishing between our primary, particular, and communal home and our universal, global, and cosmic one.[8] In offering this framework, he gives us a stance that embraces "common space"—the space within which we all live. This space can still be described as "the world," but it can now be seen as a

setting where we pursue the common good—as part of the created order, where life is to flourish and good is to be preserved. As Anabaptists, we are able to accept this common—universal or global—home not as essentially evil and to be shunned but as a God-affirmed setting for our common life.

A comprehensive examination of Reimer's political theology is beyond the scope of this article. Drawing primarily from his work published in *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, I will give attention to four main approaches Reimer employs, to four themes that surface in his development of Anabaptist political theology: an application of Trinitarian theology, a consideration of law, a broader use of scripture, and an openness to a more objective view of church history and its lessons.

A Trinitarian framework

A dominant theme in Reimer's scholarship in general, including his work in political theology, is an application of a Trinitarian framework or hermeneutic. His commitment to the biblical text and classic Christian orthodoxy leads to a conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity is central for Christian faith and foundational for a Christian social ethic. This commitment to a robust Trinitarian theology leads Reimer to a key criticism of Schleitheim's political-theological perspective: its simplistic duality, if taken to an extreme, is not consistent with nor does it adequately reflect Trinitarian belief. A closer examination of the three persons (Reimer uses the phrase "ways of being") of the Trinity helps us develop a more nuanced understanding of how God relates to humankind and thus shape a more adequate comprehensive political theology.

The strong Christocentrism of Anabaptist tradition puts a heavy weight on the person and teaching of Jesus and can tend towards a "Jesu-monism."[9] If focus on Jesus is not placed within a robust Trinitarianism, our ability to understand all the ways God is at work in the world may be impaired, and with it our sense of how we might relate to our world. Reimer explains: "Good theology must have its own prior grounding in a certain view and experience of God—in Trinitarian monotheism. In short, behind a good social ethic is a good theology."[10] We cannot understand one person of the Trinity apart from the other persons and must

resist isolating one way of God's being in the world. Reimer's examination of patrology, Christology, and pneumatology provides important insights that affect the shaping of our political theology.

We encounter God as Father as the first person of the Trinity. In this way of being, God relates to the world as creator and sustainer or preserver of all that he has made. To speak of God as Father is to point to his providential relationship to humankind and broader creation. God as creator and sustainer transcends human understandings of good and evil—and every particular ethical system. The first person of the Trinity expresses divine judgment in our fallen world, and the biblical narrative reveals God using individuals and groups of people in various capacities to mediate both his punishment and his reward. A consideration of God as Father includes both the pursuit of the good and the need to address the existence of evil within civil society. Reimer contends that God cannot be confined to the human category of pacifism (or any other human-generated category, for that matter), as God *freely* acts to preserve and govern his creation. In this first way of being, God "tolerates no idolatry, sits in judgment on all human presumption . . ., is both lamb and lion, and remains mysteriously hidden (*Deus absconditus*) to us even in its revealedness in Christ."[11]

If focus on Jesus is not placed within a robust Trinitarianism, our ability to understand all the ways God is at work in the world may be impaired, and with it our sense of how we might relate to our world.

In his consideration of the second person of the Trinity, Reimer identifies the need to see in Christ both *Logos* and *Nomos*. In the Son, God is revealed as "the formative or structuring principle of creation"[12] who expresses *Logos*—wisdom, love, grace, reconciliation—and *Nomos*—law, form, and boundaries. Reimer's Christology engages the role of structure, ordering, and law in society as reflected in the teaching that Jesus Christ came to bring fulfillment to the law.

The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, "is immanent, personal, transformative, *life-giving power*."[13] It is through the power of the Spirit that we are able to live our lives in a world of ambiguity, brokenness, and sin. Reimer emphasizes that "God has created the world good, God has redeemed the world in Christ,

and God is reconciling the world to himself through the Holy Spirit."[14] This statement acknowledges that God's work of reconciliation occurs in the world and not just in the church. Therefore, what is happening on the stage of cosmic and human history has meaning: God is at work in and through concrete societal and cultural realities. What are the sociopolitical implications of acknowledging that God works by his Spirit not only in the church (in the perfection of Christ) but also beyond it? We can't simply dismiss the social order and focus exclusively on the church or on its history. If we do so, we miss seeing God at work in a broader realm.

The role of law

A second theme that Reimer develops in his political theology is an understanding of law. "The question of law, and particularly natural law, is critical for any full-fledged social-critical theory. If one is intent on exploring the possibility of developing a systematic social-political theory from an Anabaptist Free Church perspective, some consideration of how law is to be understood is indispensable."[15] Law is an essential component of the preservation and enjoyment of life in society. Reimer incorporates at least two main building blocks in this consideration of law: the existence of a form of natural law as an ordering of creation, and Jesus as the fulfillment of the law.

Reimer contends that a positive role for civic authority and institutions, including the legal framework, can be embedded in a sense of the ordering of creation or natural law. "Law is an essential part of this divine 'yes' to the world in both its prelapsarian (before the fall) and postlapsarian (after the fall) state."[16] Reimer builds his case by drawing heavily on Karl Barth's discussion of creation. "The creation sequence is but an account of how God progressively separates, divides, and creates boundaries (what I call here Law) against the threat of the chaotic realm so as to make life possible and to provide the stage on which the theatre of the covenant of grace can take place."[17] Laws can be viewed as provisional forms by which God's grace is structured, enabling our common life to be preserved and to flourish. This consideration of creation and its continuous, dynamic ordering is key to a Trinitarian natural theology.

Natural theology also points to universal principles or laws that can be known and applied to the pursuit of the common good. But Reimer makes a critical distinction in his discussion of universal principles: "They are always mediated through particular communities, frequently religious ones. While there is no neutral vantage point through which universal moral and ethical principles can be mediated—the universal is always mediated through the particular—nevertheless, there are universals that can be translated into public law and civil institutions."[18] Close study of Jewish-Christian tradition (as well as other faith traditions) gives us insight into moral principles or themes that have shaped the broader legal framework in a positive way.

Reimer's consideration of law also includes a Christological component: Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. The Jewish view of law did not contain a false dichotomy between the religious and the civil. Hence the fulfillment that Jesus provides must somehow reckon with both, whereas the usual focus within Anabaptist circles has been almost exclusively on the religious or spiritual aspect of the law. Reimer's work identifies these questions that must be examined: What does it mean to consider Jesus as *Nomos*? What role does civil law play? What role has Christianity played in the development of Western legal tradition?

A third theme in Reimer's project is exegetical: he insists that a broader engagement with scripture—both Old Testament and New Testament—is required in shaping an Anabaptist political theology.

A broader engagement with scripture

A third theme in Reimer's project is exegetical: he insists that a broader engagement with scripture—both Old Testament and New Testament—is required in shaping an Anabaptist political theology. This emphasis not only underscores his commitment to the classic Christian theological tradition; it gives broader shape to an Anabaptist political theology. A critique that Reimer levels at traditional Anabaptist social ethics is the nearly singular focus on the Sermon on the Mount. "The Sermon on the Mount in itself can simply not bear the freight that it is asked to bear. It does not give sufficient advice for family, vocational, and social life. We need the whole Bible as a guide for Christian life—a theology of the whole Bible."[19] To focus so exclusively on the

Sermon on the Mount, at the expense of the whole of scripture, is to "make it into a hermeneutical key with which to understand everything—the whole Bible, the whole of God's relation to the world—[and] is to make ethics the starting point for theology."[20] The starting point, of course, is a good theology, drawing on the whole of scripture, which in turn shapes ethics.

Drawing on the work of Mennonite biblical scholar Waldemar Janzen, Reimer examines the Old Testament as a resource for the development of political theology. The tendency in Anabaptism to look almost exclusively to the New Testament has meant that many theological themes that inform a sociopolitical view in the Old Testament have not been sufficiently considered. Its themes of land, family, stewardship of creation, and justice not only yield fruitful insights for our lives today but underscore the principle that theological reflection on matters related to the sociopolitical has a long history among God's people.

The tendency in Anabaptism to look almost exclusively to the New Testament has meant that many theological themes that inform a sociopolitical view in the Old Testament have not been sufficiently considered.

The work of John W. Miller is another source for Reimer's political theology. Miller calls for a broader examination of the way God used rulers of the other nations to advance God's plans and purposes, not only for Israel but for humankind. Further, Miller's challenge to comprehend the narrative unity and comprehensive nature of the whole of scripture helps us avoid supersessionism in our political theology.

Turning to the New Testament, Reimer looks to Acts and the Pauline Epistles, identifying relevant accounts for consideration: encounters with civil authorities, reliance on law and courts, appeal to the benefits of citizenship, and consideration of the rightful place of civic authority in God's ordering of the world. This broader exegetical engagement raises questions, such as: What role does policing have in society? What role do secular courts of law play in the Christian scheme of things? In theologizing around these and other questions arising from a broad engagement with scripture, our political-theological framework embraces necessary truth.

A more objective view of church history and its lessons

A final theme that Reimer employs is a more nuanced review of church history—Anabaptist history and that of the broader church—in order to apply lessons and identify examples that can enhance our understanding and our practice in the sociopolitical realm. Understanding ourselves as but the most current generation of Christians attempting to navigate the challenges surrounding the relationship between church and civil society opens us to the wisdom we can glean from earlier generations and elicits our acknowledgment that the historical record is usually more complex than it is simple.

The lessons Anabaptists have typically taken from church history, starting with and following the time of Constantine, are almost exclusively negative in terms of political theology. Mennonite theologians have tended to see all the ways the church went wrong, all the theological distortions that flowed from the church-state relationship in Christendom. While Reimer affirms that the Constantinian shift in the early fourth century introduced many theological distortions, he also calls "for a more differentiated analysis of the Constantinian problem."[21] Drawing on an array of recent studies on the Constantinian era, he examines both negative effects on as well as positive contributions to the development of political theology. One Christian leader Reimer points to in this era is Lactantius (ca. 250–ca. 325). Lactantius developed a theological view of forbearance—as distinct from tolerance—which allowed different religious groups to coexist even as Christians assumed their religious perspective was superior and true. Given the later prevalence of oppression of opposing religious views and minority groups, the contribution of Lactantius was a helpful one in the early years of the Constantinian era and continues to have resonance today. This is but one example of a positive contribution to political theology that stems from this period in church history.

Understanding ourselves as but the most current generation of Christians attempting to navigate the challenges surrounding the relationship between church and civil society opens us to the wisdom we can glean from earlier generations and elicits our acknowledgment that the historical record is complex.

Turning to the history of his own church tradition, citing the work of C. Arnold Snyder and Werner Packull, Reimer again challenges an oversimplified view of history that has tended to inadequately address a diversity of experience and views that existed in early Anabaptism. From some more neglected parts of this diverse expression of early Anabaptism, Reimer gleans insights to enhance our view of and interaction with civil society. As illustrative of what can be gained by an objective consideration of Anbaptist history, Reimer brings into focus Pilgram Marpeck (1495–1556). Marpeck's life and thought provide evidence of a less starkly dualistic view of the relationship between church and world, one that can help shape the political theology of Anabaptists today. Reimer contends that the "Marpeck model" has much to teach us:

> *A non-separatist Anabaptism with a clear sense of Christian and moral identity; a collaborative-communal approach to biblical interpretation, theological reflection, and witness; energetic engagement in apologetics and ecumenical debate; and active participation as a full-fledged citizen in civic affairs and public life but always with a personal proviso . . . is what Mennonites and all Christians should strive after.*[22]

Whether in his examination of the life of Pilgram Marpeck as part of a broader review of Anabaptist history or in his identification of positive and negative lessons of Christendom, Reimer is more open to a careful discernment of those places where the spirit of Antichrist and the Spirit of God have been at work. This more nuanced examination is a necessary, exemplary stance for us in seeking to draw insights from church history that can shed light on our path today.

Conclusion

For Anabaptists and the wider Christian community, Jim Reimer has made important contributions to the growing body of work on political theology. He took major strides towards the goal of providing a more honest Anabaptist political theology. One only regrets that his untimely death in 2010 prevented the continuation of his work; in it these themes, and other aspects of his

project, could have been more fully developed and more thoroughly integrated. Even so, the contribution he has made to Anabaptist political theology will continue to provoke and challenge us as we pursue the vital mission of the church in our time.

Notes

[1] A. James Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology: Law, Order, and Civil Society*, ed. Paul G. Doerksen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).
[2] Ron Sider, *Just Politics: A Guide for Christian Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), xi.
[3] Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, 2.
[4] Ibid., 20.
[5] Ibid., 21.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 49.
[8] Ibid., 129.
[9] Reimer uses this term in *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2001), 334.
[10] Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, 174.
[11] Ibid., 6.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 8.
[14] Ibid., 22.
[15] Ibid., 117.
[16] Ibid., 50.
[17] Ibid., 7.
[18] Ibid., 44.
[19] A. James Reimer, "Towards a Theocentric Christology: Christ for the Word," in *The Limits of Perfection: A Conversation with J. Lawrence Burkholder*, ed. Rodney J. Sawatsky and Scott Holland, 2nd ed. (Waterloo, ON: Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies, 1996), 102.
[20] Ibid., 103.
[21] Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, 63.
[22] Ibid., 124.

About the author

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What secularization feels like

Anthony G. Siegrist

Late last summer I moved from a small town on the Canadian prairies, part of Treaty 7 territory,[1] to the nation's capital. The move was a bit of a chore, even though a fellow named Russ drove a truck containing all my family's belongings across the country so I didn't have to. Before Russ showed up, I did not know that loads on moving trucks do not go on and off directly as they would if you or I were driving our own things. I had thought that a driver would load a trailer with the belongings of one or more families in one part of the country, drive it to another part of the country, and deposit each load in turn. This is not how it works. Instead, some bits of wire and silicon converse with each other to figure out how to move things across the map, wasting as little fuel and driving time as possible. Fuel and driving time are both costs—and costs, the bits of wire and silicon are told, must always be minimized.

Last summer I moved from a small town on the Canadian prairies to the nation's capital.

The result is something like an amoebic merry-go-round. Things get on and off, and the future beyond the next stop or two is undetermined. Our things, destined for the eastern side of Ontario, first traveled south to Calgary, where the driver loaded more things, then north to Edmonton to both drop off and pick up things, then south again to Calgary, where more things were dropped off. This, at least, is how I remember Russ's account when we finally met again near the Quebec border. After Calgary the truck headed east to Medicine Hat to pick up more things. There finally and resolutely its nose was pointed east across the prairie provinces. Just after the truck entered Ontario, the bits of silicon and wire demanded a stop in Thunder Bay and then Toronto before the truck headed southwest to Kitchener. Until 1916, Kitchener was known as Berlin, but it was not good to be

German in 1916, so in that year the city shook free from its Mennonite roots and adopted the name of Earl Kitchener, a British field marshal famous for his African triumphs. I doubt that my family's things took much issue with this history as they looped back north and east on highway 401, making a stop in Kingston before docking at our home on the edge of the nation's capital. Our things had been on the truck for the better part of a month, presumably winning and losing friends and absorbing historical errata along the way. When we parted ways out west, Russ could not have told me that this would be the way of things. The gods had not yet informed him, for they had not yet received the necessary oblations of data.

As our things slunk their way east, my family and I had time for a leisurely drive across the country. We went camping, watched cowboys, and visited a Benedictine monastery with a hundred-year stockpile of pottery clay. We even had enough time to spend several days doing business with a lawyer, a locksmith, and our new congregation's administrative assistant. Oh yes, and we had enough time to spend a full week with Grandma and another full week in our new home without anything but our camping equipment—stainless steel bowls, inflatable sleeping mats, a large tent, and rain jackets.

I had thrown out all of our food in North Dakota, because our van was crammed. It had been impossible for me or my wife to climb close enough to our infant son to sooth him during his regular verbal protests. If there is any glitch in the system administered by wire and silicon, it is just the fact that when your things are loaded onto the truck, the driver cannot tell you when they will reach their destination. That date is constantly recalculated, depending on new shipping requests. Eventually the driver is ordered to drive home, and after dropping off our things and making a final stop along the Ottawa River in Pembroke, Russ headed back to New Brunswick. We finally had what we needed to prepare a decent meal.

None of this is about secularization, except that it is

But none of that is about secularization; none of it has the least bit to do with religion and its supposed banishment from public life. Except, of course, that it does.

When I tell people that I have moved from Alberta, they assume this means the city of Calgary. You know already that this was not the case; I have said that the town I left was small and that it was on the prairies. Calgary is curled into the prairie grassland by the Bow River, but by Canadian standards it is not small. I have not yet told you much else. In actual fact, as opposed to the pseudo-facts that swirl around presidential politics, the town we left had a population of 3,320. To serve that population and the surrounding farmland, it had two high schools, two grade schools, one small hospital, two bars, five restaurants, one police detachment, several derelict grain elevators, and at least eight churches.

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A fifteen-minute drive down the road from our old town would take you to the closest neighboring prairie outpost. It was originally a Catholic settlement, complete with a large house for women religious. Our town was Protestant. Our town did not have a convent, but it did have a Bible college, one of the oldest in western Canada and at one time the largest in the country. From there missionaries went out to every nook and cranny in the world. Then forty or so years later, they came back to a retirement of Bible study classes and growing tropical trees indoors. Having braved the jungles and mountains of far-off lands, they spent their sunset years being purified by the Canadian cold in mobile homes and postwar bungalows, some dying saint-like without money for a funeral.

At one point during our stay in this little town, my wife and I hired a crew to put a new roof on our house, a small postwar bungalow clad in yellow stucco. We thought, given the reputation of roofing crews, that it might be a good morning for our children to play indoors. There is a certain set of vocabulary we hoped to withhold for their future enjoyment. What actually transpired was that the crew spent much of the morning debating the relative merits of various Bible translations. Had our kids been outside, they might have learned something of the linguistic prejudices of King James's translators or the pros and cons of inclusive language.

Originally the town was lower down, on the banks of a creek. Sometime about 1912 it moved upland to squat beside the Canadian Northern Railway. You could see the hills of Zion from there—but as of 2014, our little town had not yet ascended them. There were the usual party houses propagated by a fertile mix of boredom and oil money. There were kids who spray-painted penises on the high school, the dollar store, the old high school, stock trailers, sidewalks, and moving railcars. There were occasions when the police had to corral drunks. There were nurses in the emergency room that treated patients who had overdosed on illicit substances. The band Trooper once played at the hockey arena, and enthusiastic fans set fire to a pile of leaves after the show. I assume the stimulus for this arboreal conflagration was the band's eternally enduring anthem, "Raise a Little Hell." An off-duty police officer stomped out the fire. "The town wasn't quite heaven," an ex-pastor once told me, "but it was pretty close." He lived with the retired missionaries in the mobile home park.

Now my family and I call Ottawa home. As cities go, Ottawa's reputation is not particularly licentious. It is, obviously, a government town. Recruiters and realtors call it a "family town," which is their way of avoiding the term "boring." Ottawa's museums are conservative. Some of its buildings are historic, but its architecture is generally muddled and lackluster. The city's center is not a street but a canal. People paddle it in the summer and skate it during the winter, when the tourism leaflets boast "the world's longest skateway." And yet this place has no desire to climb Zion's hills. We cannot see them. When I visit the café near our church, there are people whose clothing marks them as Jews and Muslims. The other day in the space of three blocks, I saw a woman in full burka and one enjoying the spring sunshine in full bare-skinned glory. In this place, guns are occasionally used to kill people rather than deer or gophers. Yet not all of this is secularization either; some of it is nothing more than the difference between a population of 3,000 and 1,000,000.

Belief in God has become one option among others

Near the beginning of his massive book on the subject of secularization, a lanky Quebec-born philosopher suggests there are three senses in which we might see secularization at work around us.[2]

First, we might see ourselves caught in a tidal drift from a premodern society where the political realm, despite its being labeled secular, was dependent on some acknowledgment of God, to our modern social arrangement, where such acknowledgments are irrelevant. There is ample evidence of this shift in Ottawa, on the surface at least. The municipal government has recently banned the traditional prayer before its meetings.

So secularization could refer to that. Or, second, it could refer to an alleged decrease in religious practice resulting from a rise in education, science, or whatever. This once-commonsense belief seems hard to link with facts. If we find ourselves entranced by this vision of secularization, we move beyond the evidence of people's actual practices and into the wishful realm of lawyers, bureaucrats, and the disaffected offspring of fundamentalist preachers. Religious forms might be changing, but it seems unlikely that we are on a train headed off into an areligious promised land where science stops faith at the province line.

To experience secularization is to have moved from a time when it took great effort to disbelieve in God, to our own situation, where belief in God is one option among others; it is "no longer axiomatic."

The third sense, the sense of secularization that the lanky philosopher is most invested in, is less alarmist but no less significant. It is one that denotes our experience of the religious life as a life occurring within a clear sense of alternatives. To experience secularization in this way is to have moved from a time when it took great effort to disbelieve in God, to our own situation, where belief in God is one option among others; it is, to quote the philosopher, "no longer axiomatic." But to this we must add one addendum: the absence of the axiom does not result in an obvious, gut-churning sense of loss. There is no divine vacuum in our secularized hearts. Rather, for most of us something quite like spiritual fulfillment comes from within this world, from the gritty beauty of friendship or art or the view of the Ottawa valley from the hills on the Quebec side.

Not long ago a terrible news story shocked our city. It was alleged that a member of the national police force had chained his son in the basement of their home. According to newspaper reports, when the eleven-year-old was rescued, he weighed only fifty pounds. The case has since gone to trial, so one morning I

saw splashed across the front page of a city paper the revelation that the father had also subjected his son to the ministrations of an exorcist.

Exorcism has been with Christianity from its earliest days. In the seventeenth chapter of Mathew's Gospel, Jesus is reported to have cast a demon out of a boy. The boy had epileptic seizures, and his family reported that the demon would take control of him, causing fits and flopping the child into the open fire. Some Christian communities today continue Jesus's legacy under the new heading of "deliverance ministry." One can be delivered from a range of hard-to-pin-down afflictions stretching from depression to a diverse assortment of sexual temptations. At its most tame, exorcism/deliverance is nothing more than praying for sufferers to be released from oppression by forces beyond their control. It can be more elaborate, though, with screams, thrashing on the floor, wild incantations, and the parading-about of crosses. The subtext of this particular Ottawa news cycle seemed to be that the father's resorting to exorcism confirmed that he was a monster. If it was otherwise, the public would face the possible existence of forces beyond their control.

It is true that much attributed to the demonic in the past now has other explanations. One can only imagine that today the beneficiary of Jesus's deliverance would have found the epilepsy diagnosis sufficient. Ockham's razor cuts quite well, which is something of a surprise, since we can't yet fully control the onset of seizures. If we could, we would not need to confiscate the driver's license of those who suffer them. What is true in this small sense is also true at the social and political level. Western governments pulled what levers they could to make the Arab Spring stick. It didn't. So we are now taking away their keys. The situation is at present such that one senses a metaphysical squeeze, a compression of the notion of causation, the denial of the possibility that something might—as Aristotle would have believed—be prompted by more than one agent. Russ and his digital overlords delivered our possessions, God needed not be thanked. Thus a resort to exorcism is taken to be of a piece with a resort of violence. The metanarrative cords that bind any openness to the transcendent with violence are thick indeed. Should they break, well, chaos is at the gates.

It is in such an environment that members of my congregation sometimes describe the process of informing their colleagues about their faith as "coming out as a church person." Though the responses they receive are varied, there is one that shows up with a peculiar regularity: the hope that being a church person is a matter of culture. My fellow congregants find colleagues willing to celebrate their Mennonite cultural roots but much less enthusiastic about their holding actual theological beliefs or engaging in Christian practices. Cultural peculiarities are something a secularized society knows and, in a general sense at least, appreciates. Part of this response is surely an effect of the fact that culture can be commodified. "Mennonite" is now a point of attraction for tourists and furniture buyers in places like Kitchener—née Berlin. Culture is subject to the analytical probes of social scientists. It is deemed safe and so is welcomed in the parades that liturgise inclusive democracies. In short, culture is subject to the leading institutions of modern life: the market, the engines of science, and the state. It is this subjection that renders it safe for public consumption. Religion, itself a category of the social scientists, and theology are not. My congregants are welcomed as Mennonites, with their love of borscht and four-part harmony, but questioned as church people. Religion and theology, after all, imply an openness to the transcendent, which though we hate to admit it, is beyond the reach of our modern institutions. It lies somewhere outside the demarcations of the quantifiable, perhaps in territory that Canadian public discourse once called "barbaric cultural practices." It is us but it is not us.

Members of my congregation sometimes describe the process of informing their colleagues about their faith as "coming out as a church person." One response shows up with a peculiar regularity: the hope that being a church person is a matter of culture.

One of the rituals that comes with moving to a new locale is introducing yourself to the neighbors. On the fringes of a city, as we are, this ritual takes on seasonal regularity. Our neighbors work for the federal government, military, national police force, and other security agencies. These entities shuffle employees around like checkers. It is the case then that summer brings a level of home-swapping here that I had only seen before on TV

shows. My wife and I have learned to be coy about my occupation. I am a pastor.

My wife is less shy than I am. She once mentioned to a neighbor at the park that her husband was a minister. Her conversation partner seemed surprisingly impressed. I say "surprisingly," because those of us in the ministerial ranks are sometimes a bit embarrassed at how easy it is to join. No quality control extends across all brands. Ours is a self-regulated industry.

We have to scroll down through my wife's conversation a little to uncover the root of the surprise: it was that our neighbor assumed my wife's partner was a *cabinet* minister. It seemed more plausible to her that I would be in the government's inner circle than that I would be a member of the clergy. It's true that many churches are closing their doors; however, there are still many, many more of these ministers than the other kind. Perhaps the surprise was rooted too in the fact that when clergy make the news here, it is mostly in connection with litigation or criminal investigations. Congregations and their networks wrangle over ownership of church buildings. Historic denominations process abuse-related lawsuits. The most famous member of the clergy in our city is a priest who was convicted of theft and fraud. Apparently his gambling addiction was difficult to fund. One might wish that the plethora of buildings and institutions named after saints or religious orders, or even the stories of divine love that lie beneath Western culture, would provide a counterweight to these contemporary tales of woe. That is wistfulness and romance. They do not.

Homeless in a technological society

A prominent social critic of the previous generation—from Bordeaux, where all critics should be from—describes our era as one dominated by "technique."[3] For him, this concept implied a quest for efficiency, with its attendant works of universalization and mechanization. Such forces are hardly limited to the transcontinental movement of goods. National capitals are obvious centers for such developments. What is national policy, if not the disregard for small places and local rhythms? What is a modern liberal nation, if it is not the pretention that history is merely grist between the political wheels of contemporary sentiment? We

have thrown off our imperial overlords, political and social, but are now fast becoming subjects of a new efficiency, one of our own choosing but one that tolerates no exceptions.

Clergy feel these forces too. We do so even as we maintain that our speech about the transcendent has purchase. In the small town from which I moved, some churches, in an attempt to keep up, enacted programs imported from urban centers on the far side of the Atlantic. The other day someone called our church office from a phone bank in Texas, offering our congregation "biblical content" on a "Netflix-like platform." If we do not experience secularization as the total disappearance of religion from public life, or the obsolescence of spirituality, or even as the evaporation of overarching norms and narratives, we experience it as a sense that our search for meaning and our acknowledgment of the transcendent are choices made from a buffet or from the results of a web search.

If we do not experience secularization as the total disappearance of religion from public life, we experience it as a sense that our search for meaning and our acknowledgment of the transcendent are choices made from a buffet or from the results of a web search.

Like all buffets—or web searches, for that matter—the religious choices on offer are circumscribed. Not only are the offerings largely limited to private life, but they have mostly been appropriated and made tolerable to the foreign palates of modern technocratic consumers. I'm sure that some of my congregants would love "biblical content" on a "Netflix-like platform"—from Texas. But I doubt that the fellow from the phone bank would show up to do a funeral. I don't think he would hold the hand of a dying woman and nod as she says she lived her faith, even if she didn't speak about it. He probably would not put words to our shock on the Sunday morning after a child was found chained in a basement.

My family's things have now been here in the Ottawa region for more than a year. My hunch is that Russ continues his driving and episodic returns to New Brunswick. He had other ideas, but I think he's still driving. I think he's still driving, but I actually doubt that he ever returns home. Few of us ever return home. His home now is the world of silicon and wire, ocean-spanning optical fibers, and mobile phone signals. His home and mine is the

transcendent crushed into the material, rooms of enchantment flattened by the pressures of vast metaphysical seas. It works perfectly. Exchanging transcendence for transience is a deal we wanted. Nevertheless, now we the secularized pray—we cannot not—that somehow the governing algorithms would find it in themselves to make new homes for us. We pray for homes sturdy enough and expansive enough to contain both the vicissitudes of life and the haunting sense that there is something just beyond the reach of calculation.

Notes

[1] Treaty 7 was an agreement between Queen Victoria and several, mainly Blackfoot, First Nation band governments in what is today the southern portion of Alberta. It was concluded on September 22, 1877; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_7.
[2] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).
[3] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Knopf, 1964).

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Contesting memory

How a moment of small-town pageantry became a national news story

Arnold Neufeldt-Fast

A decade ago I represented Mennonites at a World Council of Churches "expert seminar" in Geneva on "The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections."[1] A United Nations representative at the event reminded us that the churches in the West can play a vital role in their own countries—challenging warring rhetoric and encouraging their own governments in the work of peacekeeping.

Since that gathering in Geneva, an episode occurred in and around my own life that brought home that lesson. The event was of surprisingly broad public interest in Canada.[2] In writing about it, I hope to inspire readers to do something similar: to document your own journey, especially those events where in looking back, you see that the journey, contribution, strength, or orientation is explicable only because of the legacy you have inherited from previous generations.

Little did I expect that Stouffville's earliest peace church history would come into the limelight in 2012 as the Canadian government planned bicentennial commemorations of the War of 1812.

In hindsight, my activity was almost instinctual—deeply connected to my identity in the wider Anabaptist-Mennonite story, and in particular in the long Russian Mennonite experience of vulnerability and displacement in various contexts of nationalism, revolution, totalitarianism, and fascism. A political situation arose, and I and my Mennonite church community knew that we had to speak together and that we had a unique and significant contribution to make, precisely as Mennonites.

A proposed military parade in a town with a pacifist history

In 2006, after a six-year sojourn teaching at a Mennonite seminary in Switzerland, I returned to Canada with my wife and

daughter and settled in the community of Stouffville, Ontario. The town had been established in 1804, almost exclusively by Pennsylvania (Swiss) Mennonites, Quakers, and the Brethren in Christ (Dunkers): these are Canada's three historic peace churches. Today the town is a vibrant, multiethnic, pluralistic community just north of Toronto.

Little did I expect that Stouffville's earliest peace church history would come into the limelight in 2012 as the Canadian government planned bicentennial commemorations of the War of 1812. Through Mennonite Central Committee, some Mennonites, Brethren of Christ, and Friends had prepared materials to tell the peace church story of that time—especially in the Niagara area, where some of the battles occurred. But Stouffville was some distance from those historical sites, so it was a surprise that our community's Mennonites were thrown into a situation in which they could give voice to the concern of a broader segment of Canadian society troubled by the increasing militarization of Canadian life. As the federal government ramped up plans for the War of 1812 celebrations, supported by a budget of 28 million dollars—and a government-promoted reading of Canadian history with war as its "epitome and essence"[3]—a not insignificant number of Canadians were looking for a different, more truthful and hopeful narrative that would shine a spotlight on Canada's peacekeeping initiatives. The stage was set for some group to articulate clearly and with authenticity a longer tradition of Canadian contributions to peacemaking.

That happened in May 2012 in Stouffville as a result of a local controversy. The area's member of Parliament, Paul Calandra, proposed to the Whitchurch-Stouffville town council a "Freedom of the Town" ceremony and military parade. The proposal identified the War of 1812 as "Canada's most formative war"; a parade would give opportunity "to commemorate" the town's "local history in relation to the War of 1812." The traditional military exercise would include "a range of current and historical military vehicles" and possibly the participation of the Royal Canadian Air Force "through the use of CF-18s which [would] complete several fly-bys during the parade." The Governor General's Horse Guard (with a War of 1812 connection to a nearby community, but not Stouffville) would be awarded the Freedom of the Town.

Perhaps the lieutenant governor general for Ontario would also attend.

Naming the distortion

This proposal shocked me, when I reviewed the agenda for the upcoming town council meeting. It appeared on the town's web page without any prior notification or consultation with town councillors or community groups. There was no accompanying staff report—and it was to take place in just eight weeks' time! It was apparent to me that the proposal—absent any participation by the peace churches—significantly distorted Stouffville's earliest history and discounted Stouffville's real settlers' contributions to the fabric of Canadian identity. Though this Swiss Mennonite immigration story was not my Dutch Mennonite family's direct experience, I had already adopted the story of Stouffville's beginnings, grafting my own story into it, and its story into mine. After all, we carry the same name; have read the same martyr book, confession of faith, and catechism for generations; and had helped each other mutually since the first Swiss Mennonites left for North America with significant logistical and financial aid from their Dutch co-religionists.

In speaking to the town council, our point would be very simple: a commemoration event to recognize Stouffville's history in the first decades of the 1800s should recognize that ours was an overwhelmingly pacifist story.

I informed the mayor, the MP, and the local media that I would speak to the issue at council and bring representatives from the churches, including other clergy. (This was one of the few times that I have highlighted my credentials as an ordained Mennonite minister.) Our point would be very simple: a commemoration event to recognize Stouffville's history in the first decades of the 1800s should recognize that ours was an overwhelmingly pacifist story, a history of the first conscientious objectors to war in Canada's (pre-)history.

Our resistance to the local commemoration was neither politically partisan nor historically uninformed. Our claim that the original local settler story was being erased and rewritten was well-documented and had strong legitimacy: "We believe . . . that Stouffville's pacifist origins are worthy to be remembered, ex-

plored and celebrated" during the two-hundredth-anniversary celebration of the War of 1812.[4] I reminded the mayor and MP that our town crest is crowned by a peace dove, which recalls the commitments of our first settler groups, Canada's three historic peace churches.

A tense face-off

It was a tense face-off between the mayor and the member of Parliament, on the one side, and some fifty peace church representatives, on the other. The latter were young and old, and most were descendants of original settlers. Seeing many of his "friends and acquaintances in the chamber," the mayor stated that he was "saddened" that the opposition to the military parade had reached this point. In comments from the chair, he suggested that one [me!] or two individuals had become active instigators of this community disunity.

The next day Pieter Niemeyer, pastor of Rouge Valley Mennonite Church and resident of Stouffville, wrote an open letter to the mayor and councillors:

> *I am following up on the previous council meeting. There is a significant concern that I have in terms of some of the things that were said.*
>
> *We had a number of our youth in attendance, to model community engagement. What surprised me were your comments, Mr. Mayor, in which you essentially scolded the delegation for our engagement on this issue. You stated that you were "sad that it had to come to this." What could this possibly mean? We followed all the appropriate procedures to express our concern regarding this proposal. It is our right to do so. Such a comment communicated that somehow we needed to be ashamed of ourselves for some reason. Your sadness, quite frankly, is bewildering to me. The underlying message communicated by you, Mr. Mayor, to the youth present, and all of us for that matter, is that you do not welcome us to exercise our democratic right.*
>
> *What makes me sad is that this event appears to have been pre-planned and arranged without any consultation*

or say of town people and was expected to be rubber stamped by town council for [the member of Parliament,] Mr. Calandra.

We are not museum pieces, nor relics of a by-gone era. We are living, breathing, connected people of this town.

Sincerely,
Pastor Pieter Niemeyer[5]

The MP admitted that until recently he had known almost nothing about Mennonites, but the long-time mayor, a local lumber salesman, certainly did. Despite the fact that upwards of fifty peace church adherents attended the first council meeting, the mayor and MP remained convinced that one or two individuals were behind the protest. The MP repeated that claim to the Mennonite media later that month.[6]

National attention

The local paper, which only publishes on Thursday and Saturday, placed a pre-publication draft article online after the Tuesday meeting. Within hours, Carys Mills, a reporter for Canada's national paper, *The Globe and Mail*, was alerted to the story and contacted me. Whereas the local story was about disunity in the community, she and her editor understood the larger significance of this story: "The pushback in Stouffville is part of a movement to tell another side of the war's story: those who didn't fight and were proud of it," she reported.[7] In the first twenty-four hours after the *Globe and Mail* story had been printed, the online version received 189 comments. Another 123 comments followed in the next days—a comparatively high response rate. The story resonated with many people across the country. Almost all the comments were critical of the federal government's war celebration plans and commended the peace church resistance.

The *Globe and Mail* reporter saw the larger significance of this story: "The pushback in Stouffville is part of a movement to tell another side of the war's story: those who didn't fight and were proud of it."

This half-page story in the front section of the Saturday edition of Canada's national newspaper triggered further media interest. The following Monday, I was interviewed on the Canadian Broad-

casting Corporation's national flagship radio program, "As It Happens," with a follow-up—and critical—interview three days later with our member of Parliament. An important national conversation had started from these small beginnings, and government representatives were on the defensive for the first time. Not long thereafter, I received a phone call from a Global Television Network reporter. She wanted to juxtapose the next day's visit by Prince Charles to Toronto's historic Fort York with the "Stouffville War"—the Mennonite protest of the War of 1812 commemorations in Stouffville. The *Toronto Star*, Canada's largest newspaper, published a longer op-ed piece I wrote on the issue and Stouffville's unique peace church history.[8] And more than a month after the debate began, another Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reporter interviewed me for a related online article ("Conservatives Draw Fire for War of 1812"), which generated 377 responses (again, a comparatively very high number).[9] Even the host of Saskatchewan's largest AM radio talk show took interest, and had me on the program to talk about Stouffville, Mennonites, and the War of 1812.

The item of greatest concern nationally was never simply the cost of celebrations for an event of marginal interest to most Canadians. It was the event's appropriateness and the manner in which history was being conscripted for the political purposes of the day. Our local member of Parliament was also parliamentary secretary to the minister of Canadian heritage and as such was responsible in part to shape and fund the national commemorations of the War of 1812. His proposal to commemorate Stouffville's military contribution to the War of 1812 with a large military parade highlighted perfectly the government's effort to contrive a narrative, a history—in spite of the facts!—as a framework for its own current agenda on the world stage. This was an open invitation for the Mennonites, Quakers, and Brethren in Christ to tell their story.

A kairos moment

Theologically I found it appropriate to speak of this as a *kairos* moment for our churches, an opportune time for action and intervention. Nonetheless, Minister of Canadian Heritage James Moore commented on the commemorations generally: "It's an

essential role for government to remind Canadians of what unites us," and the War of 1812 bicentennial is such an "opportunity to teach Canadians their own history." He specifically indicated support for our MP in Stouffville[10]—his own parliamentary secretary. Because the Freedom of the Town was to be awarded to a military unit connected with the governor general (who knew the Mennonites of Waterloo County well from his previous role as president of the University of Waterloo[11]), I also drafted a letter addressed to him for the moderator of Mennonite Church Canada (who happened to be a descendant of Stouffville settlers); it was endorsed by the denomination's general board. It asked the governor general to intervene.

In this same context, a new book by Ian McKay and Jamie Swift was getting some significant attention. In *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*, McKay and Swift gave language to the message that I and many other Canadians were sensing: war was being placed at the centre of the national memory and imagination, and the "crusading soldier" was being honoured as the epitome and essence of our history. This was certainly happening in Stouffville, and according to McKay and Swift, at the national level we were seeing the extreme rebranding of a nation. To argue that war can be a legitimate last resort in the face of violence is one kind of claim, but to contend that war is "an indispensable foundation of true Canadianism" is something else and discounts large chapters of Canada's history. Yet this assertion is what McKay and Swift—and I and many others—were hearing from Stephen Harper's government.[12]

The item of greatest concern nationally was never simply the cost of celebrations for an event of marginal interest to most Canadians. It was the event's appropriateness and the manner in which history was being conscripted for political purposes.

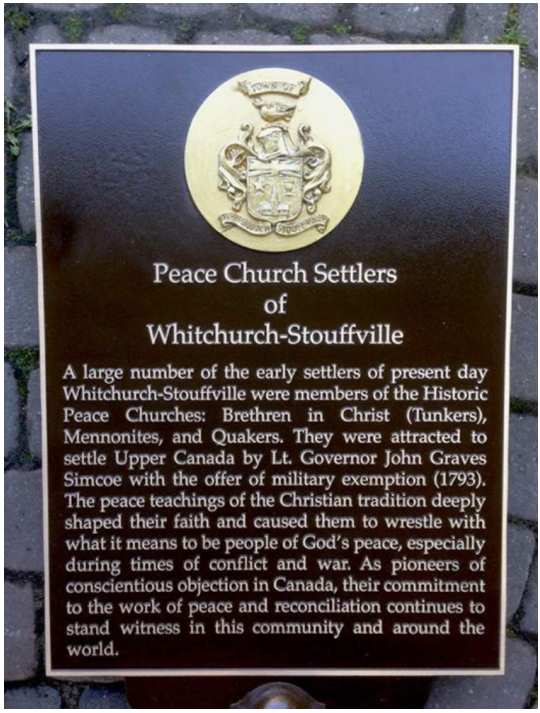
In hindsight, it's apparent that the little controversy in Stouffville was ideally suited to attract national media attention. Here were faith communities with roots that predated the War of 1812, who are bearers of an alternative narrative, and who have a long history of contributing to Canadian life. The editor of one local paper wrote, "What was supposed to be a small-town moment of pageantry and remembrance has become a national news story."[13] The associate editor of the town's other

newspaper wrote: "It is not often that Stouffville gets the attention of the national media, but May was not your typical month in town politics."[14]

Despite the controversy, Whitchurch-Stouffville town council voted to endorse the military parade and the Freedom of the Town event without the involvement of the peace churches. While the event was approved by town council, it was not unanimously endorsed, as is the requirement in many Canadian municipalities for such recognitions. Explicit or not, it was a myth-making, identity-shaping civic exercise manufactured by the member of Parliament, and to a lesser degree, by the mayor and town councillors.

The testimony of the real radicals

The Stouffville-area Mennonites and Brethren and Christ have a strong memory of conscientious objection, from both World War I and World War II. A number of World War II conscientious objectors and members of their families are still living and are members of local congregations. This was the Canadian story that I could adopt and represent, precisely because of the related Mennonite conscientious objection story of my own grandfather.



Importantly, conscientious objectors (including surviving spouses or siblings) were present at each of our delegations to town council (three in total) and at the silent military parade protest. One year later and after much hard work, we convinced town council to allow us to erect a peace plaque in

the centre of town, with the town crest, honouring our town's founding families as pioneers of conscientious objection in Canada. Council was divided, and some voiced strong opinions against it, but the proposal passed.

I had experienced the older members in our Stouffville-area Mennonite congregations as excellent representatives of their generation's understanding of peacemaking. Their lives and witness in the community have for decades been consistent with both a deep commitment to biblical nonviolence and a desire to make a positive contribution to a more just world locally and around the globe. In Whitchurch-Stouffville, this generation started the Mennonite community thrift store, a large residence for seniors, and a day camp and overnight camp for city children. Their ancestors here may have been the "quiet in the land,"[15] but these seniors are well-integrated members of the larger community, known for their values and their positive contributions to community life. One councillor who sympathized with our presentation noted at the town council meeting of May 1, 2012, that "it is of paramount importance that we honour and respect those who founded and built our community, and whose descendants still are a driving force in so many of the charitable organizations in our community."

This twofold expression—resolute nonviolence and love for the needy around the globe—was captured in the May 22, 2012, Global Television Network interview in Stouffville. I brought the reporter and the cameraman to the back room of the Mennonite Central Committee Care and Share Thrift Store and asked one of the older women who was quilting what she thought of the very public controversy in Stouffville. Aware of the upcoming military parade, she replied simply but confidently that she is a pacifist, and for her, killing is simply wrong. Off camera I told the reporter: "These are our real radicals, working quietly behind the scenes week after week, year after year, raising funds for relief work in war-torn areas around the globe." The other older women (and one conscientious objector) at the quilting frame reminded me of my grandmother Helena and captured a spirituality of love of God and love for neighbour in practices of concrete service and humility. Not surprisingly, many in this older cohort were uncomfortable with the idea of being present while tanks rolled along

Main Street, and they refrained from participating in an explicit peace protest.

A more activist approach to peacemaking

The leadership for the peace church protest quickly and naturally fell into place. I was the theologian who has written on Mennonite peace ethics and has been active ecumenically in work on issues of peace and justice, with a strong interest in our history. Pieter Niemeyer, in addition to being a local Mennonite pastor, was also a reservist with Christian Peacemaker Teams and has a longer history of peace activism nationally and internationally. Rene DeVries, a layman, had been involved in peace activism since his youth in his native Netherlands (curiously, all three of us have Dutch roots); and the new Brethren in Christ pastor, Steve Authier, was very keen to become more intentional about his Christian peace witness, and allowed the Freedom of the Town event to ignite his desire for a more active peace witness. The Friends, though small in numbers, were also committed from the beginning. But none of this witness would have been possible without our respective adopted church communities, who for generations had been living the tradition locally, with convincing integrity.

Admittedly, this was a more active approach to peacemaking than what had characterized previous generations. Our leadership team comprised activist Christians in their forties and fifties, who—in their experience, training, offices (as pastors and theologians), and practice—represent what is now a dominant Mennonite/Anabaptist model of peacemaking. This includes an understanding that Christians are called (a) to get at the roots of evil and war and to address the systemic conditions that create injustice and violence; and (b) to participate actively in the reconciliation of social catastrophes globally and locally.[16] The mayor's surprise at the strong response by the peace churches was therefore understandable: passive nonresistance, once the hallmark of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches, had evolved. Already during World War II, Mennonite conscientious objectors in Canada whose fathers and grandfathers had been conscientious objectors in Russia wanted to be more than just the quiet in the land; they wanted to make a constructive contribution to larger

society. And by the second half of the twentieth century, Mennonites in Canada had developed a more confident Christian peace activism.

On the morning of Saturday, June 16, 2012, Stouffville had a large military parade (but without CF-18 fly-overs and without the lieutenant governor in attendance). About fifty members of our churches gathered near the original settlement site on Main Street in Stouffville for a counter-demonstration. We—young and old—were wearing white T-shirts and Mennonite Central Committee buttons that said "to remember is to work for peace."[17] McKay and Swift remind us that "memory itself is contested terrain," and we were contesting the memory of our town that was being glorified in the military ceremony. Instead, alongside the military ceremony we observed "[our] own official commemoration of local history in relation to The War of 1812."[18] We firmly but peacefully contested the terrain of memory and bore witness to a living tradition of nonresistance and peacemaking. This was the real contribution of Whitchurch-Stouffville's earliest residents—Canada's pioneers of peace and conscientious objection—to the War of 1812. Indeed, it is a history worthy to be remembered, explored, celebrated, and leveraged—in an age of anxiety.

Ian McKay and Jamie Swift remind us that "memory itself is contested terrain," and we were contesting the memory of our town that was being glorified in the military ceremony.

Lessons learned

I learned some important lessons along the way.

First, there is no justification for demonizing those with whom we contend. The still unredeemed "principalities and powers" are at work in all of us. Given our own complicity, a penitential stance, not triumphalism, is the appropriate posture. Though the peace church representatives disagreed sharply with the agenda of a few politicians who wielded power that year and had huge budgets at their disposal, we chose to be guided by the theological virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and above all, love. This is the armour that biblical tradition recommends for the battle, for engaging the world with the good news of peace. It is too easy to demonize an individual, an office,

a political party; it does not help the cause and is usually self-blinding. For me, this was a lesson gleaned from the witness of previous generations.

Second, we need each other. Never was I as aware of my need for the larger church as during that short period when we were in the spotlight locally and nationally. The need was for co-workers, for perspective, for prayer, for feedback, for background historical work, for political and media advice, for support and encouragement. Our church outreach committee gave the green light, and leaders in the other local Mennonite, Brethren in Christ, and Quaker communities were quick to support and participate. A Mennonite historian could—within forty-eight hours and in time for our first presentation—point us to some crucial historical sources (court cases) in the Archives of Ontario, of local individuals fined in 1812 and 1813 for refusing to allow their property to be used for military purposes.

The Mennonite Central Committee website on the War of 1812 was up and running with important resources and information. Peace church plaques in Niagara by Mennonites, Quakers, and Brethren in Christ were posted in physical sites and virtually on the web, laying the foundation for our cooperation in Stouffville. I could connect the *Globe and Mail* reporter to Carol Penner, then pastor of Vineland First Mennonite (Canada's first Mennonite Church, located on the War of 1812 frontlines), to help demonstrate that our witness was embodied in a larger community with a long and consistent testimony. Dick Benner, editor of the *Canadian Mennonite*, asked helpful questions, and entered into the lions' den with us, conducting professional interviews of the MP, the mayor, and the director of the local museum.

Many times we did not know whether we were on the right track, whether our approach was too politicized, whether we were going too far or not far enough, whether we were moving too fast or too slow. We were unsure about the shape and consequences of our witness, whether at town council, with the secular media, or at the military parade. How often did I second-guess myself! But at each juncture, it was the local and broader church that helped discern and give support and encouragement. The witness would have been impossible without this entire network of peace

churches behind us at the crucial moments. Moreover, I had just recently completed writing significant portions of my own Mennonite story, which provided me with the identity and conviction out of which to act.[19] Because of that work, I knew who I was.

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A call I could articulate for our churches was simply to continue to faithfully build community and networks, do our scholarly homework, and be faithful in our worship and in bearing good fruit with initiatives like those happening through Mennonite Central Committee. And then when the kairos time comes, when the right door opens—where and when we least expect it—the resources, support, expertise, reputation, and people are at hand. Expect the unexpected: "G*ott kann*!" Theologically, it is good to assume that where the Spirit is at work, God opens doors for participation and provides the resources for that work. That was our experience in Stouffville. The Apostle Peter writes, "Always be ready to give an account for the hope that is within you" (1 Pet. 3:15). But we need each other; it can't be done alone. In our experience, this lesson was confirmed time and again and gave us encouragement.

In a curious twist from our navigation of the labyrinth of the events of those days, our federal riding of Markham-Stouffville is now represented in Ottawa by Jane Philpott, a "new" Mennonite from our congregation, who was given a powerful cabinet posting and simultaneously asked to chair the Cabinet ad hoc Committee on Refugees (during the 2015–16 Syrian refugee crisis). She is joined by the new Leader of the Government in the Senate, who is of Russian Mennonite descent (he is a grandson of a minister who was part of the 1920s immigration to Canada), consciously and deeply rooted in that group's larger story and especially in the work of Mennonite Central Committee.[20] On the other side politically, Don Plett, the opposition whip in the Senate, is from a Kleine Gemeinde congregation in Manitoba (from the 1870s immigration),[21] and the ancestors of Premier of Saskatchewan Brad Wall came from a daughter colony of the Chortitza Colony (also 1870s immigration)![22] Each of these leaders has had signifi-

cant opportunity to draw on important strands of this unique, larger story, and to animate their actions with an Anabaptist faith experience.

A third lesson: know what and whom you are giving witness to, and then speak wisely. The peace church witness cannot be an ideology, an ism—even pacifism—over against other isms, and the church cannot pit one political party against another. If the church formally links itself to an ideology or party, it soon loses its ability as a faith community to make its unique contribution towards peace. The MP sought from the start to isolate our witness by characterizing it as partisan politics. If we were to speak credibly as churches and get any traction with our protest (and get attention from the media), we could not be—or be perceived to be—partisan. In this case, the ordination credentials of key leaders were important for the media and for one or two municipal politicians, though we did not use overtly religious language in the church's engagement with politicians or the media.

The presence of World War II conscientious objectors—at first a curiosity for local politicians—became increasingly important and was eventually honoured publically with a peace festival a year later. The conscientious objectors gave our protest roots and credibility. Ultimately, we, the politicians, and the media knew that our church's most powerful communications tool was not an ideology but the embodiment of a particular expression of the Christian tradition. This authenticity is what gives Mennonites an outsized influence when they address issues of war and peace, as has been documented for Mennonites in Russia in the 1920s and at other times. The peace church representatives at the Stouffville town council meetings and at the military parade numbered fifty or sixty people—in itself not a large number. But again it became clear that a small, multigenerational faith community with a particular, credible embodiment of Christian love can communicate loudly and effectively, and get respect far beyond its own circles.

A legacy, a charism

In and through the Stouffville events, many Mennonites were reminded through our church press not to despise or neglect or be embarrassed about the special heritage and calling of the historic

peace churches. We have a particular and important legacy, gift, or charism. In the evangelical circles at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto where I work, and in the ecumenical circles at the Canadian Council of Churches where I represented Mennonite Church Canada for seven years, all are aware and expect that when other churches are ready to throw in the towel and reluctantly bless military solutions to conflict, the historic peace churches will remind all of the undeniable gospel mandate to love the enemy. They know that that is our gift, which we have inherited, which our communities have nurtured and explored and tried to articulate and embody, in many different times and places, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. And they expect us to stand up and speak. It is our spiritual gift that we bring to table, which enriches the entire wider body of Christ. The others have their gifts as well, from which Mennonites surely can and must learn. Yet at the right time and place, it can become appropriate to point to this inheritance: to the pioneers of conscientious objection to war who went before us, to the historic peace church contribution to the fabric of Canadian society, and to the peace work done by our denominational peace and justice ministries and by inter-Mennonite relief and justice agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee.

Notes

[1] My contribution to the conversation was: Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, "Christianity and War: The Pacifist View," in *The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections*, ed. Semegnish Asfaw et al. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005). 31–36.

[2] Portions of this article were first written for presentation at the 2013 Peace and Justice Association meetings at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, October 18, 2013. A chronology of the events recounted here, with links to more complete documentation, can be found at https://www.scribd.com/document/98603123/Peace-Church-Witness-Stouffville-Chronology-and-Links.

[3] Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012), xii.

[4] Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, Letter to Mayor and Town Council of Stouffville, April 30, 2012; full text at https://www.scribd.com/document/91794237/Freedom-of-the-City-Event-Stouffville.

[5] E-mail message to the mayor and the member of Parliament, with copy to the author, May 2, 2012.

[6] Dick Benner, "Editorial: Wresting with the 'Powers,' " *Canadian Mennonite* 16, no. 11 (May 23, 2012), http://www.canadianmennonite.org/articles/wrestling-powers.

[7] Carys Mills, "Bicentennial Celebrations an 'Affront' to Ontario Town's Pacifist

Roots," *Globe and Mail*, May 5, 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/war-of-1812-celebrations-an-affront-to-ontario-towns-pacifist-roots/article4104936/.
[8] Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, "War of 1812: More Than a Soldiers' Story: Military-Themed Celebrations Ignore Canada's Early Pacifists," *Toronto Star*, June 9, 2012, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/2012/06/09/war_of_1812_was_more_than_a_soldiers_story.html.
[9] Meagan Fitzpatrick, "Conservatives Draw Fire for War of 1812," CBC Inside Politics Blog, June 15, 2012, http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/conservatives-draw-fire-for-war-of-1812-spending-1.1265851#socialcomments.
[10] Cited in Mills, "Bicentennial Celebrations an 'Affront' to Ontario Town's Pacifist Roots."
[11] Conrad Grebel University College is a Mennonite liberal arts college affiliated with the University of Waterloo.
[12] McKay and Swift, *Warrior Nation*, 270.
[13] Jim Mason, "Editorial: Freedom Event Taken off Rails," *Sun-Tribune*, May 17, 2012, 6.
[14] Ben Embiricos, "Talk of the Town: Parade Debate Tests Community," *Stouffville Free Press* 7, no. 7 (June 2012), 11.
[15] Although early Anabaptism spread in the sixteenth-century in part because of the process of urbanization, persecuted Swiss and South German Anabaptists eventually retreated to agricultural life in safer rural areas and became known for centuries as the "Stillen im Lande" (peaceful country folk). See Leo Driedger, "Urbanization," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Urbanization&oldid=134552. The Dutch-Prussian-Russian branch of Anabaptism remained more urban.
[16] Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History* (Winnipeg: CMU Press), 2013.
[17] See https://mcccanada.ca/learn/what/peace/peace-buttons.
[18] Mason, "Large Crowd Welcomes Military Parade."
[19] Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, *Walking the Labyrinth* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, forthcoming).
[20] Dick Benner, " 'I Am Proud of My Roots': New Senator Peter Harder Talks about How His Mennonite Background Shaped His Life in Politics and Public Service," *Canadian Mennonite* 20, no. 9 (April 20, 2016), http://www.canadianmennonite.org/stories/%E2%80%98i-am-proud-my-roots%E2%80%99.
[21] For more information, see Henry Fast and Terry Smith, "Evangelical Mennonite Conference (Kleine Gemeinde)," Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, March 2012, http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Evangelical_Mennonite_Conference_(Kleine_Gemeinde)&oldid=141110.
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Gendered politics, embodied lives

Jonathan M. Sears

The 2016 United States presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton elicited comment from across the political spectrum and around the world about women as leaders. Clinton's presence in top political jobs once filled mainly if not only by men shows that many societies have made progress towards attaining political equality for women. In order to better understand how change happens towards greater equality and inclusion, mainstream feminist thought in media and scholarship deals with the undeniable gains women have made in political leadership and participation.

Embodied politics moves us from considering politically relevant differences between women and men to embracing a richer vision of human diversity and more complex challenges in seeking greater inclusion, nondiscrimination, and justice.

But how complete is this picture? To answer this question, I consider less mainstream, more critical and radical perspectives based on traditions of feminist thinking outside dominant cultural ideals and institutions. Throughout, gender remains defined as "the established psychological, social and representational differences between men and women, which are socially determined and culturally variable."[1] We must go further. I conclude by discussing the idea of embodiment. Drawing on classical, critical, and radical feminism, my consideration of embodiment frames a wider scope of concerns about our identities. Embodied politics moves us from considering politically relevant differences between women and men to embracing a richer vision of human diversity and more complex challenges in seeking greater inclusion, nondiscrimination, and justice.

Politics of presence

Media coverage of gender and politics tends to focus on women in

politics: the proportion of female legislators and executives on all levels, from the municipal to the national. There is encouraging news. Progress in breaking through the glass ceiling has increased women's share of political leadership positions; women's participation in decision making has increased significantly in the past century, the past generation, and especially since the 1990s. To contextualize the prospect of Hillary Clinton becoming the next US President, award-winning *New Yorker* columnist Robin Wright noted that not only have nearly twenty-five percent of nations worldwide had female presidents or prime ministers, but in countries as different as Mexico and India, women constitute as much as a third of national-level parliamentary representatives.[2]

In Canada, the gender parity of the newest cabinet was widely celebrated, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's "Because it's 2015" retort (when asked about his new half-female cabinet) garnered international attention.[3] Political leadership roles once reserved for men are increasingly filled by women. As Anne Phillips insists in her seminal book, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), female leaders worldwide have been crucial, not only in decision-making processes and in disrupting the symbolism of predominantly male political leadership, but also in establishing so-called women's issues as matters of wider public policy concern.

An ethics of care

Complementary to the politics of presence are observations that stem from an "ethics of care" tradition of moral philosophy, which is situated broadly within feminist ethics by works such as Virginia Held's *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). According to this view, meaningful personhood and active citizenship cannot be fully grasped with exclusive emphasis on men's experience, interpreted in turn as universally human. Care ethics rejects the idea that our moral relationships are to be modeled on those among independent competitors contracting together for mutually reinforcing self-interest. Instead, care ethics presents really existing, cooperative (if asymmetrical) interdependence as paradigmatic for understanding human beings in our shared lives in society. Adding to the political relevance of women's greater inclusion in public life,

care ethics foregrounds ostensibly private-sphere concerns of care for children, the sick, and elders. Care ethics also interrogates how and why culturally masculine or feminine traits tend to be overrated or underrated as politically relevant and significant to being fully human.

Leading men

A fictionalized example of a certain interpretation of masculinity illustrates how gender traits can be represented as human traits. In Jason Reitman's 2009 film, *Up in the Air*, actor George Clooney plays the character Ryan Bingham. A handsome, highly successful professional, Bingham flies 300,000 miles a year, trades on his elite status, lives out of a suitcase, and fires people on behalf of their employers. In this image of masculine success in contemporary culture, according to Bingham, "Your relationships are the heaviest components in your life. . . . We weigh ourselves down until we can't even move. Make no mistake: moving is living."[4] Capturing the links between highly valued professional competence in a global economy and certain constructions of masculinity, Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell coined the phrase "transnational business masculinity."[5] Connell laments that such dominant models of successful masculinity not only reinforce inequalities between men and women but also enclose men in limited notions of what flourishing might look like, even as only a few might ever come close to living into this reality. Ultimately, the meaning of gender for politics must face really existing and multiple identities: the many ways to be a man or to be a woman.

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Gender and privilege

Thus, gender ceases to refer solely to women and men in relation to each other in public service and private sector leadership roles, and it encompasses also what are dominant or commonsense ideas of masculine and feminine traits and behaviours, and what might be livable alternatives. Necessary but not sufficient are perspectives largely concerned with "adding women in" to historically male-dominated political and economic institutions. Also fruitful

to consider is the political relevance of "masculine" and "feminine" in relation to other identity markers. In her 2016 book, *Politics and Sex: Exploring the Connections between Gender, Sexuality, and the State*, Canadian political scientist Edna Keeble points out that even as mainstream feminisms have gained in influence, they have nevertheless also "been implicated as reflecting the experiences of the privileged few, namely white, Western, heterosexual, middle-class women."[6]

To the extent that feminist thought and activism have been aligned with the experiences of more privileged women, prevailing discourses have remained relatively comfortable with adding women in to existing political institutions and structures of power. These are precisely the gains sought and celebrated in a politics of presence. But present in *what* politics? Related and also at issue is what scope exists for innovation and change in the political leadership roles that women may fill. To what extent is conformity demanded by these roles? By agreeing to accept a given role, a woman acknowledges that she will be able and obligated to live into the role. As women increasingly fill once male-dominated roles, the politics of presence must contend with the scope of political possibilities in which female leaders have made places and names for themselves.

To the extent that feminist thought and activism have been aligned with the experiences of more privileged women, prevailing discourses have remained relatively comfortable with adding women in to existing political institutions and structures of power.

Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher is among the most discussed and controversial contemporary female leaders. Her death in April 2013 rekindled debate about her legacy as the "first woman to become prime minister of Britain and the first to lead a major Western power in modern times."[7] Given that "she rubbed many feminists the wrong way," with declarations such as "The battle for women's rights has largely been won,"[8] it is unsurprising that, among the many observations of Thatcher by journalists, scholars, and activists is the comment that "one woman's success does not mean a step forward for women." Against decades of progress in smashing the glass ceiling, "Thatcher made it through and pulled the ladder up after her."[9] To note that " 'a woman who is success-

ful' is not synonymous with 'a feminist,' " goes towards dispelling the notion that women leaders are automatically or inherently "good for other women," and further requires facing the fact that "the gender of a person matters a lot less than that person's actual beliefs."[10]

Intersecting identities: gender, race, and class

To grasp the significance of identity in political leadership, we must look past the politics of gender presence to see other dimensions of privilege that either enable barriers to be overcome or are part of intersecting systems of discrimination. Even as some categories of women are increasingly present in political leadership, other aspects of identity complicate the picture. "To reconcile the universal ideals of equality, freedom, and justice," on the one hand, "and the actual material conditions of peoples, particularly racial or ethnic minorities,"[11] on the other, requires us to ask how and where gendered dynamics intersect with exploitation and discrimination according to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences. Whether among Aboriginal women in Canada or Black women in the United States, "higher rates of being murdered or incarcerated, and the deterioration of their family and community structures can be directly attributable to a legacy of systemic racism."[12] Views of such intersectionality emphasize where and how a wide spectrum of divergent gendered experiences meet other embodied experiences, "such as those based on disability, racialization, sexuality or class."[13]

For feminists working from materialist historical and sociological analyses, inequality between men and women must also be seen in light of a gendered division of labour.[14] Stereotypes of men's and women's work produce and reproduce inequalities in wages, job opportunities, and promotions. Without seeing gender and class as interwoven in market capitalist societies, women's greater participation in top public and private sector roles will offer merely gender parity within a smaller and smaller elite enjoying an ongoing and increasing concentration of wealth. Through gender parity in politics, if its class dimensions are ignored, women leaders will inherit and inhabit the persistent and pervasive "common sense" of political and economic neo-liberalism. From this narrowed spectrum of political visions, since the

tenure of Thatcher (contemporaneous with US President Ronald Reagan and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney), political leaders (men and women) draw policy thinking and possibilities, and make these the basis of their appeals to their electorates.

Whether male or female, then, contemporary political leaders face limitations in the political possibilities they can entertain and propose in policy and public discourse. If, in turn, gender and politics is to be meaningful for deeper democratic stewardship of relatively unfettered private capital accumulation, then the issues of gendered justice and equality must be understood within the larger social context of a growing gap between rich and poor. Class-based analyses offer a necessary critique to merely adding women into socioeconomic structures that reinforce and extend inequality along lines that may include but are not simply those of gender. An expectation that female leaders will offer good news to women rests also on dominant notions of feminine or masculine traits in leadership, livelihoods, and lifestyles. As we come to recognize multiple gendered experiences and identities, we can see how the very idea of gender makes possible broader explorations of the construction of all sorts of social expectations.[15]

Beyond binaries?

As noted above, we tend to live and move within dominant ideas of gender binaries "masculine" and "feminine" as gender identities, and male and female as exclusive categories of bodies. The term *gender* can certainly refer narrowly to men in relation to women, a usage that is politically relevant to identity-based mobilization and leadership. But beyond quota-checking enumeration of political leaders identified as women, meanings of ostensibly masculine or feminine traits in leadership, lifestyle, or livelihood are diverse. Moreover, beyond a gender binary, thinking and practice related to gender *identity* and gender *expression* disrupt dualistic ways of thinking. Fluid and changeable identities along multiple spectrums are informed but never fully determined by assigned sex, and can include "all, none or a combination" of "man, male, masculine, woman, female, feminine, transgender, gender neutral, pan-gender, genderqueer, two-spirit, third gender."[16] My gender expression, as an outward performance in society, rests on gender identity, an inward, cognitive element

that reflects a my own sense of my assigned sex at birth, which relates to genetics/chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy or physical characteristics, as well as my attractions and relationships of attraction, desire, and orientation, with their own emotional and physical dimensions.

Improper anointing, embodied transgression

Taken together, the elements of this brief survey have sought to acknowledge different perspectives on women's experiences of powerfulness/powerlessness, (in)equality, and (in)justice, distinct from men's experiences of similar social phenomena. Further, sensitivity to the intersection of discrimination along the lines of gender, race, ability, and sexuality augments our appreciation of these embodied differences with relevance for democratic electoral politics and for debates and policy decisions. Looking through gender to embodiment serves also to enlarge the meaning of "politics" and "the political" as relevant to our bodily needs, desires, and sufferings. This recalls the fall 2008 issue of *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, on sexuality. Pertinent with reference to embodiment are its insights about struggles, ambiguity, ambivalence, and disagreement. As Mary Schertz observed in that issue's editorial: "There are controversies aplenty in this delicate arena of our human being. In no other area of our lives are we more vulnerable, more exposed, with fewer defenses."[17]

Looking through gender to embodiment serves also to enlarge the meaning of "politics" and "the political" as relevant to our bodily needs, desires, and sufferings.

As read by Schertz, Luke's account of Jesus, Simon, and the unnamed anointing woman (Luke 7:36–50) goes directly to the power relations among embodied persons: Simon who is established as behaving properly, and she who is not, the anointing woman. Multiply marginalized, the disheveled presumed sex worker epitomizes impropriety in her unfettered display. Moreover, the physical intimacy of washing Christ's feet with her tears and hair, and the costly waste of expensive perfume place the woman's actions firmly in the realm of embodiment: fraught with material needs, desires, and strong emotions. This intimate impropriety is key to our appreciation of Simon's objections and (as Schertz empha-

sizes) to Jesus's insistence on acceptance. There is "another proper," an extravagant and boundary-breaking challenge to status quo forms and relations.

Contemporary feminisms—whether mainstream or critical—would identify these power relations as a problematic status quo. Indeed, this resonates with Schertz's own admission of multiple positions, if not identities, at play in the propriety of our relationships: "We are all the anointing woman, and we are all Simon, and often we are both in the same moment. Young or old, married or single, female or male, gay or straight, we all struggle with our messy, not-to-be-contained sexuality—and with a sense of propriety that can overrun its usefulness."[18] Moreover, where certain threads of feminism meet views of queer and transgendered embodiment, we could further challenge the relevant proprieties by multiplying alternatives to them—alternatives to be glimpsed and for which to make space, to extend peace more widely, deeply, and fully. In the same *Vision* issue, Sarah MacDonald's article, "Opening Safe Space," helpfully interprets the word *queer* and includes the encouragement "to ask individuals [of sexual minorities] how we prefer to self-identify";[19] and Pauline Steinmann's definition of sexuality in "Singleness and Sexuality," is expansive and challenging.[20]

Dynamic and sustainable political community calls forth both openness to a wide spectrum of embodied experiences and anchors for solidarity in the pursuit of effective collaboration for greater equality, justice, and nondiscrimination.

Embodied, soulful politics

More than gender and politics as conventionally understood, an embodiment politics may embrace diverse identity expressions that need spaces for conversation about larger questions of our common humanity. A living, embodied faith must and will struggle to identify and pursue the politics fitted to it. More than simply persons *with* bodies, we are persons *and* bodies, or person-bodies. In English we translate the Old Testament Hebrew *nephesh* as "soul" rather than as "spirit," the latter being how we tend to translate the Greek *psyche* or *pneuma*. The worldview nestled in ancient Hebrew language is helpfully evocative here, and distinct from the ancient Greek worldview that undergirds much of the

still influential mind-body dualism. In expressions such as "not a soul in the room sat still," we hear this important feature of our personhood as "a soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion," we that breathe the breath of God.[21]

The roles, behaviour, activities, and attributes considered appropriate for each of us, our whole personhood as biological, societal, and sexual persons, shape our understandings and practices of selecting and following political leaders, and of active citizenship. How the body is experienced and is foundational to our identity is itself political, and recognition of diverse embodied experiences presents a further political challenge. How might we affirm identity differences while mitigating identity divisions? Even as sexuality and gender expression are further understood as plural and fluid, neither fixed nor mutually exclusive, the grounds for seeking and pursuing identity-based justice proliferate. More than engendered, our diversity is embodied. Dynamic and sustainable political community calls forth both openness to a wide spectrum of embodied experiences and anchors for solidarity in the pursuit of effective collaboration for greater equality, justice, and nondiscrimination.

Notes

[1] Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Gower), as characterized by Alexandra Howson in *The Body in Society: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 51; cited in Rainbow Resource Centre, Winnipeg, MB, "Definitions," http://www.rainbowresourcecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Definitions-2010.doc.

[2] Robin Wright, "Hillary Wouldn't Be the First Female American President," *New Yorker*, August 1, 2016, http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/hillary-wouldnt-be-the-first-female-american-president.

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[5] Raewyn Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 226.

[6] Edna Keeble, *Politics and Sex: Exploring the Connections between Gender, Sexuality, and the State* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016), 13.

[7] Joseph P. Gregory, "Margaret Thatcher, 'Iron Lady' Who Set Britain on New Course, Dies at 87," *New York Times*, April 8, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/09/world/europe/former-prime-minister-margaret-thatcher-of-britain-has-died.html?pagewanted=all.

[8] Gregory, "Margaret Thatcher, 'Iron Lady.' "
[9] Hadley Freeman, "Margaret Thatcher Was No Feminist," *The Guardian*, April 9, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-no-feminist.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Keeble, *Politics and Sex*, 12.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Kath Woodward, "Gendered Bodies: Gendered Lives," in *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies* 3rd ed., ed. Diana Richardson and Victoria Robinson (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 88.
[14] Sally Hines, "Feminist Theories," in *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, ed. Richardson and Robinson, 25.
[15] Thanks to Canadian Mennonite University students for engaging this material with me. See also Canadian Mennonite University Student Council, *Doxa: the Rainbow Issue* 18, vol. 1 (September 2016).
[16] Rainbow Resource Centre, "Definitions." Thanks to Reece Malone, RRC Education Program Coordinator, for the 'Genderbread Person' image, as adapted from C. Gonzalez et al., *Gender and Sexuality Definitions—A Visual Map* (Santa Barbara, CA: Just Communities Central Coast, 2005).
[17] Mary H. Schertz, "Editorial," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 4.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Sarah MacDonald, "Opening Safe Space," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 81n1.
[20] Pauline Steinmann, "Singleness and Sexuality," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 68–69.
[21] *Strong's Concordance* 5315, BibleHub.com, http://biblehub.com/hebrew/5315.htm.

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The politics of Mary
A sermon on Luke 1:5–56

Isaac Villegas

"The Lord has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly," Mary sings. "God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52).

There was a famous book, written in the 1970s, called *The Politics of Jesus*. You may have read it. The book shows how Jesus was a political figure, and how following Jesus has everything to do with our politics. Discipleship is political. That was the argument. There have been more recent books, with titles like *The Politics of God* and *God's Politics*, all of them explaining how life with God affects our political involvement.[1]

I'm waiting for the book on the politics of Mary, this young woman who all of a sudden finds herself at the center of God's plan for the transformation of all things, the center of God's liberation, of God's revolution.

I'm waiting for the book on the politics of Mary, this peasant woman whom we hear from today in our scriptures. She is a young woman, living under occupation, eking out a life in the midst of a violent empire, a marginal figure in her society, without power, without status, without a voice, without a future. This young woman who all of a sudden finds herself at the center of God's plan for the world, the center of God's transformation of all things, the center of God's liberation, of God's revolution, of God's work of salvation. Her life is at the beginning of the gospel story. She's the one who ushers in the politics of Jesus. Mary comes first.

"Here I am," she says to the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God. "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). In the Gospels, Mary is the first to say yes to God, yes to God's word, yes to Jesus. She's the one who welcomes God, who receives the Lord.[2] She becomes a priest, announcing God's salvation and offering her body to make

God's presence available to the world. She offers God. She offers communion with God. She offers the sacrament of Christ, with her body. She is the host of the host.

If I were to talk like a Roman Catholic, I'd say that in Mary's body the Eucharist is consecrated by the Holy Spirit who comes upon her, and that her womb breaks open in a sacrificial offering: the body of Christ, broken for you; the blood of Christ, shed for you. Mary, her body, broken and bloody, there in Bethlehem, on the first Christmas, bearing in her arms our salvation, the Christ child, who brings us into eternal communion with God. Mary, our first priest.[3]

Mary's the one who welcomes God, who receives the Lord. She becomes a priest, announcing God's salvation and offering her body to make God's presence available to the world. She offers communion with God.

Since I'm talking like a Catholic, let me tell you about Louise Margaret Claret, a French nun who lived in a convent in La Touche, a small community in the southeast of France. Mother Claret was known as a minister to priests, offering her prayers and counsel to them. In 1904, on Christmas Eve, she had a vision, a vision of the first Christmas, of the birth of Jesus as the priesthood of Mary. Mother Claret saw the newborn Jesus, she said, held in Mary's hands, as she lifted him up to God, as if officiating at a mass, at the Lord's Table, holding up the bread of the Eucharist. "This was the first mass of Mary," Claret wrote, "in the silence of the stable. . . . Mary became a priest that day, with the power . . . and the right to touch his body."[4]

To talk about Mary's politics, we have to begin with who she is, with her life, with her body, her gendered body.[5] We begin with God choosing her as the first priest of the church, the first one to offer Christ to the world, to receive Jesus into her life and to share him with others. To receive and to give. To let Christ dwell in her and to offer him to the world. And we are invited to become like Mary. We become priests like Mary—welcoming God into the world, and sharing God. Sharing God with our lives, in what we do and what we say.

It's the "what we say" part that jumps out at us in our passages from Luke's Gospel. Mary sings her words. "The Magnificat," we call it. She preaches with a song—a song of joy.

What surprises me is that we get to hear Mary at all. What surprises me is that she shows up in the story, that we can hear Mary's song, that in a world of men writing about men, an author gives us a woman's voice, a woman's story. That's rare in the ancient world.

Mary's voice is amplified by the way Zechariah is silenced earlier in the same chapter.[6] The angel Gabriel comes to him, to Zechariah, a priest doing his priestly duties inside the temple, and the angel shuts him up. He takes away Zechariah's voice: "You will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur," the angel says (Luke 1:20).

What surprises me is that Mary is that in a world of men writing about men, an author gives us a woman's voice, a woman's story. And Mary's voice is amplified by the way Zechariah is silenced. Politics is about who has a voice, who can speak, whom we listen to.

While this is going on, while Zechariah is being silenced in the temple, the people are gathered outside, waiting for their priest to emerge and speak God's blessing. "When he did come out," it says, "he could not speak to them. . . . He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak" (Luke 1:22).

The man has an important job to do for the people, and they're waiting for him, but he can't say the words. He can't offer God's blessing, God's absolution, God's forgiveness. So he flails around in front of the people, trying to say something with his arms and hands, but saying nothing. Nothing but silence. The scene ends with Zechariah looking so pitiable, as he stands there, speechless and bewildered.

"When his time of service was ended," it says, "he went to his house" (Luke 1:23). He's got nothing to offer, so he goes home. He's rendered powerless. And his powerlessness makes clear who has power in the story. Not Zechariah, not this priest, but another one: the priest in a stable, the woman who holds God in her arms, the gift of salvation for the world. To borrow words from Mary's song: *God has brought down the powerful, and lifted up the lowly* (Luke 1:52).

Politics is about who has a voice, who can speak, who has power, whom we listen to. And in this Advent story, it's Mary. She's the one. Not only can we hear her speak, but she speaks

with authority: "Truly," she says in her song, "from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). She has the audacity to tell us to revere her, to call her blessed. She knows who she is. She knows her role in the story. She knows what God has done—not just for her, but for all of us through her. What God has done with her will mean a new world, a world where the powerful will be brought down from their thrones and the lowly will be lifted up, a world where the lives of the hungry will be filled with good things and the rich will be sent away empty.

These are the politics of Mary: the politics of a great reversal, a world turned upside-down. Or maybe we should say, a world turned right-side-up. A restored world, full of God's goodness, full of abundant life.

These are the politics of Mary: the politics of a great reversal, a world turned upside-down. Or maybe we should say, a world turned right-side-up. A restored world, full of God's goodness, full of abundant life. A world very different from the one we have, where, we found out this week, the CIA has been torturing people and that most Christians in the United States approve of such practices,[7] a world where 132 school children in Pakistan were killed by a band of outlaws,[8] a world where police kill unarmed black people,[9] and a world where in retaliation[10] police officers become targets as cycles of violence spin our society out of anyone's control. A society where many people have guns and are more and more inclined to use them.[11] We need Mary's song now more than ever. We need the advent of a new world, not this one.

For as long as I can remember, I've been drawn to the subversive visions in the Bible, the stories of great upheaval, of Jesus and his apocalyptic ministry, overturning tables. Woe to you who are rich, woe to you are full, and woe to you who are laughing now, he says, for you will be hungry; you will mourn and weep (Luke 6:20–26).

I think Jesus learned his prophetic ministry from his mother. She was the one who said, "The Lord has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52–53). Jesus learned his prophetic words, his apocalyptic vision, when he was a child. Imagine Jesus as a baby, fussing at bedtime, and Mary, holding him in her arms, whispering a song to

him, her song, comforting him with dreams of revolution—the Magnificat as her lullaby.

When I think about Mary's song this year, I'm drawn to something I didn't notice before, a theme I didn't see every other time I've read this text, a word that Mary says twice: mercy. She sings about mercy: "God's mercy . . . from generation to generation" (Luke 1:50). Her song is "in remembrance of God's mercy" (Luke 1:54).

We need God's mercy, in our lives and in the world. Mercy—the miracle that comes over us and allows us to forgive. To forgive as a way to make room for a relationship, a relationship with someone close to you whom you don't know how to love anymore, whom you don't know how to care for anymore. Mercy is the miracle of restoration, of trying again and again at a relationship, even though you've been wronged, even though you've wronged another.

When I think about Mary's song, I'm drawn to a word that Mary says twice: mercy. We need God's mercy, in our lives and in the world.

We need mercy, not just in our lives at home or at work or here at church, but also in the world, where people kill or threaten to kill one another. Mercy, not militarized police in riot gear. Mercy, not a troubled man with a gun, lashing out in revenge. But none of them are listening to my sermon today, and I have my doubts that if they were, they would be overcome with mercy and give up their guns and military-grade weapons.

So, today, I'm hoping that God is here, and that God listens, and that if God doesn't listen to me, that maybe God will listen to Mary, the one who cried out for mercy, who trusted in mercy, who gave her life to mercy, to the faithful mercy of God, from generation to generation.

My hope is that God listens to Mary, and that the Son whom she bore will come among us again, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and save us from ourselves, from our self-destruction, from our cycles of revenge, as violence begets more violence, here and everywhere.

Only God can save us, with a mercy that cleanses us of our desire to punish.

During Christmas we remember a gift, the gift of mercy in the flesh, Jesus Christ, the one who forgave his enemies from the

cross, so that we may come to know the kind of life that leads to life, not death—the kind of life that reveals the mercy of God.

Notes

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[2] Rowan Williams, *Tokens of Trust* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 76–78.

[3] For the priesthood of Mary within Roman Catholic discourse, see "Eve, Mary and the Priesthood," chapter 8 in *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, by Tina Beattie (London: Continuum, 2002), 194–208.

[4] Quoted in Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 200. "Jesus came into the world. . . . She took him between her virginal hands, and lifting him towards the heavenly Father, offered herself her first sacrifice. Oh! This first Mass of Mary in the silence of the stable . . . infinite cost of sacrifice." "She became a priest that day, the Immaculate Virgin; she received, as well as priests, the power to sacrifice Jesus, the right to touch his body. . . She rested for nine months . . . preparing herself for . . . [the] infinite cost of this sacrifice."

[5] In *The Politics of Jesus*, John H. Yoder starts with Mary, but he only gives her a paragraph at the beginning of chapter 2. She functions as only an introduction to Jesus, not as a significant character in herself. If Yoder would have paid more attention to Mary, he would have had to give the politics of gender a significant place in his account of the nature of violence—both at the macropolitical and micropolitical levels.

[6] At a church small group meeting, Melissa Florer-Bixler made this point to me—that Zechariah's silence and Mary's song must be read together, as part of Luke's feminist disposition. Also see Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997): "Mary's response to the divine announcement contrasts sharply with that of Zechariah, with the result that she, surprisingly in the scenes of this type, has the last word" (92).

[7] Sarah Posner, "Christians More Supportive of Torture than Non-Religious Americans," *Religion Dispatches*, December 16, 2014, http://religiondispatches.org/christians-more-supportive-of-torture-than-non-religious-americans/.

[8] Declan Walsh, "Taliban Besiege Pakistan School, Leaving 145 Dead," *New York Times*, December 16, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/asia/taliban-attack-pakistani-school.html?.

[9] See http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/unarmed/.

[10] "Two N.Y.P.D. Officers Killed in Brooklyn Ambush; Suspect Commits Suicide," *New York Times*, December 20, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/two-police-officers-shot-in-their-patrol-car-in-brooklyn.html.

[11] Editorial Board, "End the Gun Epidemic in America," *New York Times*, December 4, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/05/opinion/end-the-gun-epidemic-in-america.html.

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Is it good news?

A sermon on James 2:1–17 and Matthew 15:21–28

Melissa Florer-Bixler

One day last year my neighbor came to see me. Her subsidized housing unit, a dilapidated duplex, had been sold to a new rental company. In exchange for a break in the rent, she had agreed to move out early, to another part of town. In her seventies, frail and tired, she wondered if we would help her pack up her things.

In my neighborhood, more and more houses of long-term residents are on the market today. Property values, including that of my house, have gone up. And I wonder, is this good news?

A few weeks later, a renovation team pulled up and turned over the entire property, installing central heating, hardwood floors, a new paint job, new appliances. A young man who looks and talks like me moved in with his dog. In my neighborhood, more and more houses of long-term residents are on the market today. Property values, including that of my house, have gone up.

And I wonder, is this good news?

Two people walk into a church . . .

The second chapter of James directs this question toward a church whose vision is clouded by class and status. The issue they're wrestling with is where to seat visitors among them. It is rare that we are given an example from first-century Palestine that translates seamlessly into our own context, but in this passage from James, we get exactly that.

Two people walk into a church. One, as James describes it, is dressed in a well-tailored suit, gold rings flashing as he makes his way down the aisle. At the same time, in walks a woman in filthy clothes. Maybe she slept in them. Maybe this is the only outfit she owns.

For the congregation in James's letter, it is obvious how the seating arrangements will unfold. The places up front are reserved

for the prominent members of the community, the wealthy and powerful. The man wearing the suit will obviously be seated there. The visiting woman, on the other hand, will mostly likely be seated in the balcony—out of sight and out of mind, kept on the outskirts of the community, inside the sanctuary yet at the margins.

And James asks, is this good news?

This question echoes throughout our scriptures, amplified in the ministry of Jesus. It is a question that reverberates throughout the history of the church. Are we preaching good news, and is that good news being born in our lives? Who decides? For whom is it good news? And for whom is the life that we live actually bad news—bad news for someone else's job and children and school and neighborhood?

The community addressed in James's letter sees good news for their church when a well-dressed man walks into the sanctuary. Surely this visitor is a sign of God's blessing, they think. He will boost their social status. If he stays, he will soon contribute to the financial well-being of the community, thus increasing the church's budget. As middle-income people who are ready to be taken seriously by their wider community, the church members James addresses want to blend into the social world around them. They are drawn to these well-suited visitors. Respectable people. Individuals with social capital. People who have something to offer.

To regard vulnerable people as guests of honor requires revelation: new ways of experiencing the world, the movement of God's grace as our bodies are drawn near to people whom the world regards as insignificant.

It makes sense. But is it good news? For James the answer is no.

The homiletician Thomas Long reminds us that the set-up of worship in the book of James is a result of this tendency to rely on our natural inclination toward what is good. "James's point," writes Long, "is not to encourage the ushers to smile with equal warmth toward all who come to worship but instead to remind the church that in the economy of God's grace, the very ones for whom the world has little regard have become the guests of honor in the household of God."[1]

We know good news when it is good news for the poor, not when it is fair. And to hear this text as good news, we need to be

changed. To regard vulnerable people as guests of honor requires revelation: new ways of experiencing the world, the movement of God's grace as our bodies are drawn near to people whom the world regards as insignificant.

We cannot come to this good news on our own. We are too steeped in an ethic of fairness to imagine that God could possibly be for some and against others, that the good news for the poor may end up being bad news for those who oppress, that "God [has] chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom" (James 2:5).

We cannot see the good news before our eyes if all we have is our own will. The very fact that we can be "hearers and doers" of the word of God requires an act of divine intervention, a miracle of God reaching down into time.

Jesus receives good news

Is it good news? Today's Gospel lesson describes a moment of revelation that answers this question. And this time the one who receives the good news is Jesus. It is a story in which Jesus comes to be surprised by the way the abundance of the kingdom spills over, erupts, and runs wild—by the way the good news becomes a revelation to him.

Jesus is tired (Matt. 15:21–28). He has set off for Tyre, a Gentile part of the country. Avoiding more confrontation, more miracles, more teaching, Jesus ducks into a house. But even here, we read, he cannot escape notice. Inadvertently, he has entered the home of a Canaanite woman with a sick child, a woman who begs Jesus to cure her little one.

Jesus dismisses the woman. "Look," he tells her, "it's not fair to give the food of children to dogs." He calls her a dog. He belittles her. He reinforces ethnic boundaries. He tells the woman that he has come for God's people, for Israel. "You," he says. "There's nothing left for you. There isn't enough" (Matt 15:26).

In response, the woman: "Even dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." There's a question in her words to Jesus: Is this good news? Is it good news? Do you know, Jesus, that there *is* enough? Can you see through your exhaustion and notice the person sitting here before you, begging for a miracle? Can you see that I am the bearer of good news to you, good news beyond your

culture's conditioning, good news beyond the boundaries you've assumed?

It's not the first time that Jesus is surprised by the abundance of the kingdom. There are other times in the Gospels when the good news gets away from him, slips beyond his reach, beyond his expectation. A woman approaches Jesus for healing—but, being pressed back by the crowd, she decides instead to reach out. She brushes the cloth with her hand. I imagine she touches him with just her fingertips as her arm stretches toward him through the crowd. Instantly she feels her bleeding stop. She can feel it inside her. Stopped—after decades. She is healed.

It's not the first time that Jesus is surprised by the abundance of the kingdom. There are other times in the Gospels when the good news gets away from him, slips beyond his reach, beyond his expectation.

Jesus's power gets away from him. It's superabundant, profligate, extravagant. And the Canaanite woman reminds Jesus that it is. She reminds him that there is enough. She reminds him that she bears this good news in her body because the gospel will shatter the boundaries of the people of God—the gospel going where it will.

And here, with a Gentile woman, as she begs for her daughter to be healed, Jesus is once again confronted by the revelation of good news. The gospel cannot be contained. It will not be bound. He heals the child because of this word she has spoken to him. Jesus receives the good news from her.

The partiality of God's good news

This woman's story must be why the lectionary points us toward James and the ragged people seated at the back of the sanctuary, those who show up to worship with their despair worn on their very bodies. Consistently, without exception, the people who bear the good news in the Gospel are those who suffer economic oppression. To put ourselves in a position to receive these people impartially is to make ourselves available to the revelation of the partiality of God's good news, that God is for the vulnerable.

Is it good news? This question finds its way to us when we make ourselves vulnerable to those who are victims of systems by which so many others profit.

It's the question that confronts us as we see Syrian refugees, camped in parking lots and gas stations across Europe.

It's the question that confronts us in the child whose only meals will be those she receives in her public school cafeteria.

It's the question that confronts us when a homeless person is arrested for begging on a public corner.

It's the question that confronts me as my neighbor packs her bags for another move to another part of town.

It should come as no surprise that James reminds us that mercy, not judgment, is what will find its way to us when all is said and done. We cannot earn our way to it through study or piety or spiritual practice. The kingdom, the outpouring of this good news, will spring up in unexpected places, like wild seeds that sprout and take off, enclosing the ground in thick weedy undergrowth. It takes off like the yeast of our communion bread that requires no kneading, no effort on our part—like the yeast that works itself into the bread you take into your body.

From James we learn that the good news will erupt from a boy's lunch, from a begging demon, from a windstorm. It will find its way into our churches. It will keep surprising us, keep upending us, keep us wondering and watching and waiting.

From James we learn that the good news will avoid the scholarly and the learned. It will erupt from a little boy's lunch, from a begging demon, from a windstorm. The good news will find its way into our churches. It will keep surprising us, keep upending us, keep us wondering and watching and waiting.

The abundance of God. This sounds like something we might want to be a part of. But James reminds us that our faith looks like becoming vulnerable to the places where we do not expect God's kingdom to erupt. We are a people in negotiation, constantly unsettled, attending to the question always before us: Is it good news?

That's mercy. You cannot earn your way into understanding the good news, but you can wait, ready to receive whoever walks through your doors. You can ask for eyes to see the messengers of good news in your life, or the ones you try to avoid. You can't lean on your own understanding, on your natural sense of goodness. You can interrogate the good news. You can organize when

you see that the current trend in urban development is not good news for your neighbor. You can welcome the good news you never expected, hands outstretched, ready to receive the one you never knew was waiting for you.

Note

[1] Thomas G. Long, "God is Partial," *Sunday's Coming* (blog), *Christian Century*, August 31, 2009, https://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2009-08/god-partial.

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Reconciliation and the residential school

Paul Dyck

During the last decade or so, as Canada has attempted to reckon with its historical and its present treatment of Indigenous peoples, and particularly its treatment of those who attended Indian residential schools, I have looked on with some discomfort. The topic of reconciliation has been a significant focus recently here at Canadian Mennonite University, particularly in light of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and it seems a good time to describe this discomfort. I understand that I hold a minority view, but I trust that examining it might do some good, regardless of what readers might think at the end of the day.

I am concerned about the way the words "residential school" have now become loaded words, and I am concerned that the particular way in which they are shameful words has the potential to blind us to important truths.

It is not easy to put my finger on the nature of my discomfort with how we think about the residential schools and their legacy. On one hand, I am not interested in defending the schools. At the same time, that is exactly what I want to do. Years ago, when I first read accounts by people who had been students in these schools, I was convinced that attending them involved and even comprised terrible deprivations. I have no confidence that I, having experienced even a suburban elementary school as traumatic, would have survived the breaking of family ties and every bond of intimacy and cultural orientation, which were matters of policy in these schools. I have profound respect for those whose resilience has brought them through this experience. I do not mean in anything that follows to minimize or simplify the residential school experience, or the experience of Indigenous people in Canada generally. Rather, I am concerned about the way the words "residential school" have now become loaded words, and I

am concerned that the particular way in which they are shameful words has the potential to blind us to important truths.

An architecture we still inhabit

Before I worked at CMU, and before I did my doctorate, I worked for a few years in Cree communities in Alberta. In a way, I actually did work in a residential school—or more accurately, in a former residential school building which was then the home of a small college where we taught everything from basic literacy to first-year university courses. The college was owned and operated cooperatively by a number of bands. The building had been—according to popular report—condemned. I also heard that every year, when the fire inspector came, the college's director met him out front and took him out for coffee. We weren't using the building because of a lack of funds. The bands had ample funds from oil and gas royalties, but deciding which band would get the campus on its land had proved impossible. In any case, from the first time I visited the place, I loved its bohemian feel. It was not beautiful, but it felt lived in and lively in a way that no new building could. It was haunted by memories, and reportedly by the ghost of a nun, but it was also living space. It was a place where people were learning and becoming stronger.

An old residential school building seems like it should be exactly the wrong place for such teaching, but that was not my experience. Instead, I had a visceral dislike for the new schools in the community, which seemed to be transplanted from the city. The old building felt truer. Truer to the realities of the situation, realities that included the fact that I was a kind of foreigner, a kind of enemy, a kind of friend-enemy.

We are so fixed on casting out the residential schools as demonic that we cannot bring ourselves to acknowledge that the architecture of the residential school is an architecture we still inhabit.

The people who were forced into residential schools have every right to an accounting, a full accounting. I have no quarrel with that. What I do object to is the way that reconciliation is being imagined through a repudiation of the residential schools. We are so fixed on casting out the residential schools as demonic that we cannot bring ourselves to acknowledge that the architecture of the residential

school is an architecture we still inhabit. I've been there in the flesh, but I mean something more: we're all there. And trying to leave cannot work and does not help.

Opening ourselves to bewilderment

One of the acknowledged problems of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the great imbalance of the testimony—that there was so little testimony from those who ran the schools. (The TRC report does treat the staff of the schools with balance and respect, but that has been lost in the larger conversation.)[1]

The depth of this problem, though, seems to remain largely unfathomed. The hope seems to be, roughly speaking, that if enough white people listen enough to the testimony of the residential school survivors, some level of white understanding will be reached so that a new day of social justice will dawn. When we finally realize how much those who were forced into residential schools have suffered, then things will change.

The critical question is not, how did we end up doing something bad, but rather, how did we end up doing something bad even as we were trying to do something good? We need to understand this bewilderment, because we are still the same people, thinking in the same ways, especially when we are trying not to.

But here's the thing. What else we white people really need to understand is how people like us imagined and taught in these schools, how they were attempting to solve actual problems with what seemed a good approach. I am not talking about the abusers but about the teachers and administrators at their best. We need to open ourselves to their bewilderment. By bewilderment, I do not mean bewilderment at having become the bad guys to society in general. Rather, I mean the more elemental bewilderment of having spent their lives contributing to the good, only to find that on the whole it did not work. Their bewilderment at pouring themselves into a solution that, on the whole, made the problem more complex and worse.

To me the critical question is not, how did we end up doing something bad, but rather, how did we end up doing something bad even as we were trying to do something good? We need to understand this bewilderment, because we are still the same people, thinking in the same ways, especially when we are trying

not to. Like it or not, unless we can think of the residential school as something closer to normal, we are not going to get much insight and we're not going to be much good to anyone. My desire is that we would inhabit the space of the residential school and resist narrating it. The quickest way out of bewilderment is to begin naming things and taking control. And we will find ourselves once again telling a story into which our Indigenous brothers and sisters will need to fit. It will seem like a new story, but it will be the old story.

Reckoning with our present monstrosity

As much as anything, I'm concerned about our tendency to cast shame from one thing to another. Picking up on the work of Julia Kristeva regarding the abject, it seems to be the case that shame is here and it must reside somewhere.[2] We are (rightly) trying to remove it from Indigenous people, but we are doing so by moving it onto others, and those others inevitably are the people who actually did the work, the front-line workers. A whole set of people who devoted themselves to helping Indigenous people now have a status reminiscent of that of soldiers returning from Vietnam: we cast our shame on them, and they bear it. The teachers and administrators of the schools, though, like the Indigenous people before them, have priceless resources and knowledge that holds transformative power, and we cut ourselves off from it when we turn them into the abject other. Ironically, the harder we try to distance ourselves from the residential school legacy by condemning those who taught in and ran those schools, the more deeply we entrench ourselves in the worst traditions of those schools.

Shame is here and it must reside somewhere. We are (rightly) trying to remove it from Indigenous people, but we are doing so by moving it onto others, and those others inevitably are the people who actually did the work.

The secret heart of our current order is that it desires an Indigenous victim. A victim to defend, yes, but a victim nonetheless. Such victimhood is produced when we assume the role of advocate for Indigenous people, against ourselves. Put another way, the former students of residential schools must talk through and against the deep damage that that project and its policies

caused, but when white liberals demonize those same programs and policies, something else is going on, something insidious. Unless white liberals remember that they speak in the same tradition that produced the residential schools, and that their most fundamental ways of thinking about the world still reside in those schools, there can be no possibility of reconciliation. We can't just switch sides, and if we think we can, all our positive sentiment is only a cover for an engine of dominance. We are the monster. I think of Jeremiah, the main character of Tomson Highway's novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, encountering his own potential to be Weetigo, the cannibalistic monster of the Cree world: an actual reconciliation can only follow a reckoning with our present monstrosity, not just with a past one. Evil is not so easily cast out.

So we find ourselves in an awkward spot. Does one apologize for running the residential schools? Obviously, yes. For what exactly? For several things in particular: the conscious and systematic attempt to suppress Indigenous languages and cultural ways, and the establishment of institutions that unintentionally made students profoundly vulnerable to abuse, and especially sexual abuse. But after that, things get complicated. When the residential school idea was invented, the Indigenous people in Canada were not understood to be flourishing, and in fact by any standards, many were not flourishing. Then as now, people saw education as a critical tool for improving life. Education itself is a treaty right. The inventors of the residential school aimed for the full participation of Indigenous people in Canadian political life. They did not aim for racial segregation, but putting Indigenous children in mainstream schools could not have been seen as a practical option.

Some of the worst damage to Indigenous culture was done by reasonable people thinking normally. I say this not as a defence but rather out of radical skepticism, and I think that it is a skepticism to which the church is called.

In retrospect, the insistence on an English Canadian monoculture was deeply mistaken, both ideally and predictively: between my mother's generation and mine, Canadian identity has shifted from an emphasis on perfect, unaccented English, to a vision of a country of many languages. My parents did not teach me their

first language, but my children are learning their mother's (Japanese). My point is that some of the worst damage to Indigenous culture was done by reasonable people thinking normally. I say this not as a defence but rather out of radical skepticism, and I think that it is a skepticism to which the church is called. The church cannot simply align itself to the normal thinking of reasonable people. Rather, the church must understand that sometimes we are at our worst when we think that we are at our best.

The skepticism to which the church is called

At the same time, we must allow our wounds to stay open. One medieval motif that stays with me is the image of the church proceeding from the wound in Christ's side: the wounded body of Christ is the salvific space of the church: in Christ's wounds we live. Or as George Herbert writes,

> *Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,*
> *Which my God feels as blood; but I, as wine.*[3]

Eucharistic theology meets real life in our response to wounds, ours and others'. Even now, Canada feels itself wounded and understands that the woundedness of Indigenous people is in some profound way the nation's woundedness. But even now, as we see the need for reconciliation, we rush to it, condemning the past and putting into operation what one friend of mine has called a "reconciliation industry," an industry dominated by lawyers and policies, and also an industry that many Indigenous people do not—and should not—trust. The present nation-building project is to reconcile, but anyone close to the wound will know that it is not going to heal on any nation-building timeline. The question is not how we will solve this problem but whether and how we will be present to each other's tragedies, even in our own irresolvably compromised positions, implicated in the wounding of the other. I do not know what other body besides the church can proclaim this message.

Why am I still committed to the church as the body that can address our present need? Ideally, because it most deeply disrupts the binary, making it impossible in the present moment to speak coherently of "us and them." But we must ask: what do we mean by church? I was struck recently by a well-intended church synod

motion proposing an act of reconciliation between the church and Indigenous people. How it is possible that we still draw this division, when for centuries there has been Indigenous Christianity in Canada? The dominant narrative insists on Christianity as a colonial imposition, and this has some obvious truth. But it ignores a long history of Indigenous Christian faith. For example, most of the Indigenous Anglican church in Manitoba was evangelized by Indigenous catechists, a fact that Indigenous bishop Mark MacDonald has made clear repeatedly and for good reason: the Indigenous church is not the property or the fault of the white church. Again, in the dominant narrative there is no room for the Indigenous church, and in some communities there is real tension between Christians and traditionalists. It seems to me that the white instinct is to feel bad about this, for what we have done, but to adopt this position is to be ashamed of Indigenous Christianity. Rather, let us deeply consider and live the theology of the church, acknowledging both the differences across the body and the unity of that body. The body of Christ which is the church is awkward, often embarrassing, and bears wounds that have been self-inflicted. It is tempting to close our eyes to it, to look to clean, well-dressed models. But they may just be another form of whitewashing.

Why am I still committed to the church as the body that can address our present need? Ideally, because it most deeply disrupts the binary, making it impossible in the present moment to speak coherently of "us and them."

We inheritors of the European colonial legacy are both obsessively fixated on our guilt and feeling a desperate need for a scapegoat. We want to be the pronouncers of our own guilt, the makers of our own sentence. Let us rather walk alongside our Indigenous brothers and sisters, open to judgment, allowing our bewilderments to meet theirs. We might be surprised at how the conversation goes.

A prayer

Creator Lord, source and lover of life,

Let us always remember
that by your wounds we are healed.

Give us grace to acknowledge
the wounds we have received
and those we have made.

Give us grace to understand anew the whole church,
a body that trespasses the many boundaries of this world,
a body of strange fellowship.

Help us turn from our own judgment,
which is a judgment of death,
to await your judgment,
which is a judgment of life.

And finally,
make us partakers in your ministry of reconciliation.

Amen.

Notes

[1] See *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* at http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf. The entire report is an important starting point for understanding the history and present legacy of the schools. See pages 14–15 in particular on the balance of testimony, and pages 121ff. on the staff of the schools.

[2] I have encountered Julia Kristeva's theory through Virginia Burrus's remarkable book, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

[3] George Herbert, "The Agony," in *George Herbert: The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Tobin (London: Penguin, 2005).

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Commodity or common good?
A call to reconfigure land and identity on Turtle Island

Deanna Zantingh

Religion and politics in Canada exist within the reshaped landscape of Turtle Island.[1] While that may seem an odd statement, it is an important one, because progress on many of the problems Canadians face in seeking a common good is thwarted by certain operative conceptions of land. And progress on many of the difficulties we face in seeking authentic Christian community is also thwarted because inherent within these conceptions of land are problematic understandings of what it means to be human. In colonial Canada we engage religion and politics from a particular place, a particular social location—under the influence of what theologian Willie James Jennings calls "a distorted vision of creation." Religion and politics have conspired to support a modern colonial agenda—connected to views of land and human identity—that continues to feed cycles of violence that victimize Indigenous peoples.

Religion and politics conspire to support a modern colonial agenda—connected to views of land and human identity—that continues to feed cycles of violence that victimize Indigenous peoples.

A new map

Understandings of land and natural law are foundational to the European colonial project in the Americas. Requiring particular scrutiny are four legal and religious concepts: the Doctrine of Discovery, *terra nullius*, manifest destiny, and a distinction between general revelation and special revelation. The understandings of land implicit or explicit in these concepts are outworkings of what Jennings identifies as "a theological mistake so wide that it has expanded to cover the horizon of modernity itself."[2] After we examine these concepts, we will listen to community members of Mishkeegogamang First Nation as they talk about experiences of land and identity, particularly using the Ojibway concept of

taashikaywin (literally "where we live" and "who we are"). Their accounts will help us understand the far-reaching effects of these mistaken notions of land and identity.

Conceptions of land and natural law inform our politics, and certain notions lend themselves more readily to seeking a common good. If we care about a common good that embraces all of us, we need a new orientation to land. Or perhaps we need to recover an old one, informed by taashikaywin and by the biblical idea of *nahalah*. But essential to that recovery are the voices of Indigenous people: "The common good can only be discerned through active participation in the conversation by all the members of the community."[3] Yet hearing their voices is impossible as long as a dominant conception of land silences these host peoples. We must find our way out of this vicious cycle. We begin by briefly examining four concepts that have misshaped our society's dominant view of land.

Distorted views of land

The ***Doctrine of Discovery*** was articulated in a series of papal bulls formulated in the fifteenth century by the Catholic church in Spain and quickly adopted by France and other "Christian" nations. The papal bulls gave "Christian explorers" the right to lay claim to any land they "discovered" for their "Christian monarchs,"[4] and identified the conditions justifying seizing the land from people who were its non-Christian inhabitants. The doctrine legitimated European nations' efforts to gain property rights to the land and sovereign power over its native inhabitants. According to the Supreme Court of the United States, Indigenous nations' "loss of native property and sovereignty rights was justified . . . by 'the character and religion of its inhabitants . . . the superior genius of Europe . . . [and] ample compensation to the [Indians] by bestowing on them civilization and Christianity."[5]

The concept of ***terra nullius***—"empty land"—contributed to the triumph of the Doctrine of Discovery. Land was seen as a commodity that was free for the taking "if it is not occupied by white Christians."[6] Legal rights to the land were acquired through discovery, symbolized in acts such as planting a flag, building a settlement, or working the land.[7] Sir Thomas More provided this rationalization in his *Utopia*: "When any people holdeth a piece of

ground void and vacant to no good nor profitable use, keeping others from the use and possession of it," war to confiscate it is justified.[8] This justification became the basis for the development of nation states in North America.

But Indigenous people never gave up their lands, the land was not empty or vacant, and their connection to the land was expressed in covenant rather than domination. It was with the emergence of the idea of terra nullius that "all the cultures of the world were stripped of their humanity."[9] The mistreatment of land and people went hand in hand. The devaluation of Indigenous people occurred alongside the colonists' appropriation of the lands that once signified Indigenous identity—and alongside the shift to viewing that land as a profitable commodity the settlers considered theirs to possess.

Manifest destiny refers to belief that America is a special nation blessed by God and destined to rule the land and redeem the earth. This belief identified European newcomers to North America as a "chosen people"[10] given the "promised land" and destined by God to create a nation of perfect loyalty to him. Theodore Roosevelt's words reflect this view: "The settler and pioneer have at bottom justice on their side; this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages."[11] Similarly, George Washington's 1789 inaugural address gives credit to the Christian God for the birth of the nation: "Every step, by which we have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."[12]

If we care about a common good that embraces all of us, we need a new orientation to land. Or perhaps we need to recover an old one. Essential to that recovery are the voices of Indigenous people.

According to early Puritan clergy in New England, the pursuit of individual interest is blessed by God and contributes to the formation of a nation that is divine—a nation not unlike Israel, that is "blessed to be a blessing to the world." But far from blessing its promised land's inhabitants, the new nation treated them as Canaanites and Amalekites, worthy of annihilation if they were not converted.[13] Peter Berger has written that an emerging alliance between Protestant theology and liberal bourgeois culture made Christian-

ity in North America principally a matter of individual morality which contributes to the progressive improvement of society.[14] The violence that has accompanied these dramatic shifts in ideology and worldview cannot be overstated; its effects reverberate seismically across the reshaped landscape of North America today and in the racialized bodies of its inhabitants.

The theological distinction between general revelation and special revelation privileges knowledge about God that comes by supernatural means, through scripture (special revelation), over knowledge about God that comes through natural means, from creation (general revelation). This distinction set up a false dualism, which solidified the reshaped landscape of North America and reinforced the supposed superiority of "Christian" Europe. It reflects a distorted vision of creation, one that undervalues the place of nature in the way we live in the world.

These beliefs about European superiority were internalized theologically long before they were expressed in the settler Christian ideals of North America. Willie James Jennings suggests that the formation of a racial scale—white to black—developed as the new organizing principle for identity, as bodies became displaced from land. Because Europeans were the ones doing the describing, they focused on skin colour to create a hierarchy that defined identity apart from land.[15] This racial scale also contributed to violence against Indigenous peoples.

A new view of land, an ancient view of land

It is a radically political act to allow a different understanding of land or natural law to reorient our religious understanding in ways that shift our focus towards a common good. I would like to suggest that we adopt a new understanding of land that is—ironically—an old and deeply scriptural one. Land is at the heart of the political and religious injustice Indigenous peoples face in North America. What is equally true, but less present in our awareness, is that "land is a central, if not *the* central theme of biblical faith."[16] Yet rarely does the land itself get our attention. When it does, the lived reality of Christianity throughout the colonial era does not fit with Walter Brueggemann's assertion that the action of God "is in the land promised, not the land possessed."[17] Instead, a distorted understanding of land has focused

on possession and thus replicated conquest narratives and denied the humanity of Indigenous host peoples.

Norman C. Habel also finds resources for reorienting the way we think about land in the biblical narrative. There the Hebrew concept *nahalah*—which Habel translates as "portion," "share," "entitlement," "allotment," and "rightful property"[18]—witnesses to land-God-people all in a symbiotic, covenanted relationship. In particular, Canaan (but not just Canaan) is Yahweh's personal nahalah. In other words, it is Yahweh who holds the rights to land. The prophet Jeremiah conceives of nahalah as an extension of Yahweh's own being. The concept of nahalah expresses the idea that Yahweh-land-people are "united in privileged intimacy";[19] they are "destined to belong together."[20] The land and the people are Yahweh's share, his portion. Likewise, out of the overflow of Yahweh, the Israelites are also given a nahalah: Yahweh and a portion of Yahweh's land. The land is a gift, a conditional grant, given to Israel out of Yahweh's nahalah and held in a treaty/covenant with Yahweh that stipulates how Israel is to treat the land. It is important to note that "violation of this treaty can mean removal or extermination from the land."[21]

The lived reality of Christianity throughout the colonial era does not fit with Walter Brueggemann's assertion that the action of God "is in the land promised, not the land possessed."

Unfortunately, it remains difficult for newcomers to Turtle Island to see why this way of seeing land matters. We do not know the covenants or treaties our host nations have had with the land. Even though they have welcomed us into these covenanted, symbiotic relationships, we continue to view the land as an entity to be owned, possessed, and reshaped. Sadly, it is often our misguided readings of Old Testament texts about land that have perpetuated this theological mistake. Listening to the experiences of host peoples is vital to fostering our capacity for other ways of seeing the land and its human inhabitants.

"I am Taashikaywin"

Taashikaywin is an Ojibway word that means "land, our identity," or "where we live, where we belong—our home." As part of a qualitative research project for my thesis on land and identity, I

sat with community members from Mishkeegogamang and learned about taashikaywin.

"Well, that's the main thing, taashikaywin, eh?" the Anishinaabe elder said. Later, the former chief would tell me, "Taashikaywin is where we intend to be originated from—that's our identity. Taashikaywin is part of us, a part of our spiritual perspective. When I say 'part of us,' that means air, water, plants, animals, and spirituality. Taashikaywin is everything. It is who I am as you speak to me. I am Taashikaywin ya." With taashikaywin, land, personhood, and spirituality are inseparable.

Another community member commented, "Basically, it is where you do stuff. That's where I hunt, where I fish, where I live, where I go trapping." One man named taashikaywin as "a traditional cultural value area. For example, wild rice harvesting, moose hunting, blueberry picking, or sturgeon fishing down the river—there's only certain areas where you can go do that." He said,

> *It's a place where people migrated to in order to live really—it was a way to survive. In Anishinaabe culture we have the four seasons. In the wintertime, families would gather in one area so that they can challenge the winter together. Taashikaywin really means a place—a sense of belonging and a sense of knowing that you will survive within that area. . . . It meant the coming together of people, the coming together as one.*

Separation of land and people

The Anishinaabe elders told me stories of growing up on trap lines on the land. Adults shared stories of childhoods spent mostly on the land, which for some were interrupted by residential school. I began to understand that the youth are among the first generations not to grow up on the land in the way many of their parents did.

Willie James Jennings suggests that "the white presence first interrupted the connection of land to identity, and then very quickly reconfigured both."[22] The reshaping of land from taashikaywin into commodity—and the subsequent reshaping of what it means to be Anishinaabe came out with particular clarity in one community member's story:

> *Where I reside now is where I grew up as a child, . . . where I seen the Sixties Scoop happen,*[23] *as my older siblings were swept away in a loud bird in the sky, let's say—that's the way I understood it. In that area, we had names for . . . I don't even know what the name of my area is in Ojibway. I just know that it's Fitchie Lake because some prospector or somebody [re]named it. I remember the name of the white man that approached my dad [saying,] "Either you take these kids to the reserve—put them in school—or we'll take them away." That's how we ended up being on the reserve. My dad didn't want to lose his last small ones. When I came [to the reserve], I received a name. The commissioner gave my dad his name. But I already had a name. My name is Nuteemgeesic: the very first light you see in the morning. That name was given to me when I was nine years old. I had a task to do, and I completed that task. And I know that each individual Anishinaabe person in this community does have an Anishinaabe name.*

Disconnected from taashikaywin

The people I interviewed experienced the move onto reserve lands as disconnection from taashikaywin. An elder told me that taashikaywin is a sacred cycle, and that

> *without the connection to our traditional land and territories, we break that bond. If you break that cycle with an Ojibway person, that's the reason there's a lot of confusion and oppression. That's the reason why you see suicides going up, why you see people hitchhiking on the highway and on Front Street idling without knowing what to do next. 'Cause there's a cycle, a sacred cycle, that's been broken, and [there's] a very confusing spirituality too.*

Another community member told me, "Growing up here my whole life, I've always felt like I was really lost, like I have no purpose. . . . I feel like I'm supposed to do something, but I don't know what it is." Many people spoke of confusion and loss, especially with regard to the youth. One community member who

was raised on the land by her grandparents said, "Somewhere along the line, I think I could already see that we're losing it, losing our identity, because our children have become confused even to know and to understand the meaning of life: to respect life, and the person that you are; to find your purpose in life."

A distorted, commodified, and racialized reconnection of body to land

Community members drew sharp distinctions between taashikaywin and reserve life. One said, "This is not taashikaywin. This is colonization of the white man, and that's where drama unfolds." One member reflected, "Going by what my parents used to tell me, sure there was a reserve here, but they spent all their time out there. . . . But now everybody's on the reserve, and nobody is really out there anymore. So it's got a big effect on this generation. And when I think about it, it doesn't make sense: nobody goes out now; they're all right here." One community member summed it up succinctly: "Now there is a new tradition: money."

All the elders who spoke with me narrated the shifts that happened as the welfare system was introduced. Treaty number 9 was signed in 1905, and by the 1920s the area was opened to mining and resource extraction. When mines required electricity, without warning Hydro installed a dam that flooded out traditional food sources, burial grounds, gathering places, and homes.[24]

The elders' stories recount the forced separation of people from land, followed by the reshaping of land into a commodity, and the reshaping of identity into a racialized way of being and a commodified existence on the reserve, As Jennings asserts, it is the displaced body that comes to represent a natural state, and "from this position they will be relocated into Christian identity."[25] Documents from the 1930s describe the religious affiliation of "Osnaburgh Indians," naming all non-Christians as pagans.[26]

"Indian" is the political term that marks the shift from being taashikaywin to bearing a racial designation. Canada's "Indian Act" legislation not only reordered people's identities but also reordered land on the basis of this racial designation of Indigenous people as inferior. This process of transforming land and identity is ongoing.

Prophets of the land

I reiterate: religion and politics in Canada exist within the re-shaped landscape of Turtle Island. Rarely do we understand the political task of loving our neighbour as a task connected to our conception of land. Like the Anishinaabe experience of taashikaywin, the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations speak of their formation out of the ground, of being brought to life through breath.[27] Their future generations are known as "the faces coming out of the ground." Land and people are not two distinct categories.

Norman Habel contends that as Jeremiah cries out over the breaking apart of nahalah, the prophet is expressing Yahweh's own anguish.[28] Idle No More, Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock protesters, and other land protectors today voice prophetic cries of anguish over this same breaking apart and its effects on the bodies of people of color. As Habel summarizes succinctly: the people suffer exile, and the land suffers desolation—but ultimately it is Yahweh who suffers both. Informed by the rich tradition of nahalah and taashikaywin, may we recommit ourselves to a common good born of an ancient vision of land, energized by the Spirit of our creator, who longs to reconcile and renew the whole of the beloved, groaning creation. After all, we are dust and to dust we shall return.

Notes

[1] Turtle Island is the name some Indigenous groups use for North America.
[2] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 43.
[3] Stephen J. Pope, "Natural Law and Christian Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93.
[4] Harley Eagle (director, Mennonite Central Committee Anti-Racism and Indigenous Relations), personal communication, March 13, 2013.
[5] Robert J. Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery," in *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.
[6] Vandana Shiva, "Earth Rights Are Human Rights," Fragile Freedoms: The Global Struggle for Human Rights lecture series presented by the University of Manitoba Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics, Canadian Museum of Human Rights, and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Winnipeg, MB, March 28, 2014.
[7] Boyce Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius: Betrayal and Rebirth in Aboriginal Canada* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1993), 29.
[8] *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 110; cited in Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, *Eco-Feminism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Zed Books, 2014), 32.

[9] Shiva, "Earth Rights Are Human Rights."
[10] Reginal Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 3.
[11] Shiva and Mies, *Eco-Feminism*, 32.
[12] Washington's inaugural address of 1789, quoted in Elizabeth M. Bounds, *Coming Together/Coming Apart: Religion, Community, and Modernity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 31.
[13] There are historical records of Puritan preachers referring to Indigenous host nations as Amalekites and Canaanites. See Robert Allen Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 99.
[14] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968); cited in Bounds, *Coming Together/Coming Apart*, 31.
[15] See Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 30–31.
[16] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 3.
[17] Ibid., 27.
[18] Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 35.
[19] Ibid., 79.
[20] Ibid., 76.
[21] Ibid., 53.
[22] Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 53.
[23] "The term **Sixties Scoop** refers to the practice of taking ('scooping up') children of Aboriginal peoples in Canada from their families for placing in foster homes or adoption beginning in the 1960s and continuing until the late 1980s"; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixties_Scoop.
[24] Marj Heinrichs and Dianne Hiebert, with the people of Mishkeegogamang, *Mishkeegogamang: The Land, the People, the Purpose: The Story of Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation* (Kelowna, BC: Rosetta Projects, 2003), 201.
[25] Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 22.
[26] The Department of Citizenship and Immigration, "Religious Affiliation of Osnaburgh House Indians," cited in Heinrichs and Hiebert, *Mishkeegogamang*, 201. "Mishkeegogamang First Nation, also known as New Osnaburgh, Osnaburgh House, or Osnaburgh for various settlements, or 'Oz' for short, is an OjibwayFirst Nation band government in the Canadian province of Ontario. Until 1993, the band was called the Osnaburgh First Nation"; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishkeegogamang_First_Nation.
[27] Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Recreation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 23.
[28] Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 87; see Jer. 4:19–20.

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