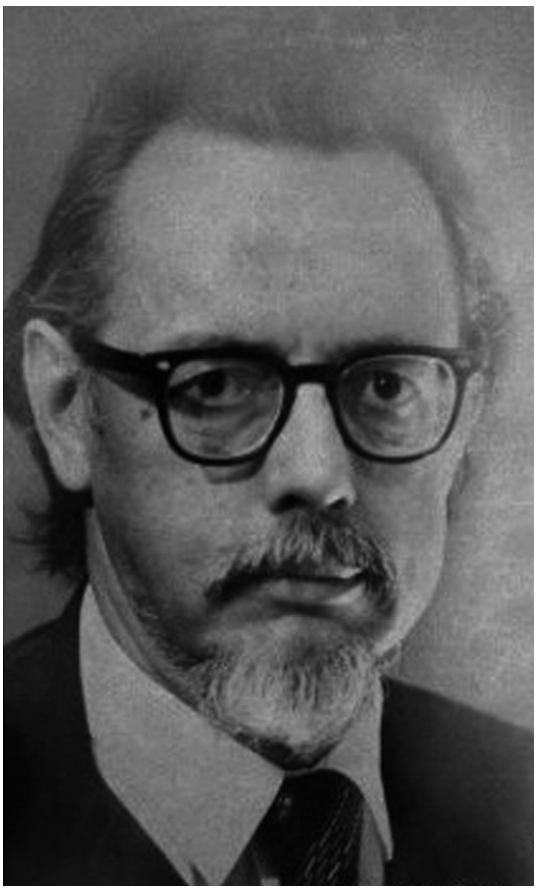
ON THE ROAD

Journal of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand
No. 47, December 2010



Catching up with

John Howard Yoder

Thirteen years after the death of the most influential Anabaptist writer of the 20th century, his books are still appearing and he is being talked about more than ever.

It's time to catch up with Yoder.

Contents

OTR 47, December 2010

Catching up with Yoder: An Introduction

Nathan Hobby

John Howard Yoder's ideas are catching on as the rest of the world catches up to him.

Yoder was always reframing theological conversations, insisting we had the wrong assumptions and the wrong questions. He has important things to say about who Jesus was and what it means to follow him; war and peace; what the church is; and how to do theology - as well as just about every other question. He was ahead of his time, showing the world how to do theology beyond Christendom.

His Anabaptism was not that of a withdrawn Mennonite with nothing to say to the world, but an Anabaptism which was light to the world, even and especially in the peculiarity of its life and worship.

One of the reasons I got interested in Anabaptism was through reading his book, *The Politics of Jesus*, and I suspect there are others in AAANZ in the same camp. His influence on Anabaptism as we think about it in Australia and New Zealand is immense.

Born in 1927, Yoder was an American Mennonite. He studied under Karl Barth and over the course of his academic career, taught many different subjects within theology, but particularly social ethics. At time of his death, he was working at the University of Notre Dame.

He died of a heart attack in his office the day after his 70th birthday on 30/12/1997. In the thirteen years after his death, at least eight books have been published from posthumously edited manuscripts. A large number of works engaging with his ideas have also been published; Doug Hynd provides a wonderful survey of these in this issue.

Because of his growing relevance to the wider theological world, his continued importance to AAANZ and the growth in Yoder literature in recent years, I felt it was important to devote an issue of OTR to catching up with Yoder.

This issue is going to be heavy-going for those who are less interested in theology or less familiar with Yoder's work. For that I apologise—we will resume normal broadcasting, with greater variety, next issue.

For the uninitiated, let me offer three key themes of his work which will orientate you a little for the pages which follow. If these themes seem very familiar to you, it is because they have become foundational for neo-Anabaptists like the AAANZ. They were groundbreaking when Yoder developed them.

1. The Political Relevance of a Non-Violent Jesus

- The Romans and the Jews didn't have it wrong when they executed Jesus for being a threat to the political order. Jesus' non-violent love of his enemies and the rest of his teachings and life threatened the way things were by establishing a new social order—a kingdom of people living at odds with the empire.
- It was no accident that Jesus chose a path which led to the cross. Loving our enemies even to the point of dying at their hands is the nature of the kingdom itself. As disciples, we are called to follow Jesus' way of the cross today.

2. The Constantinian Shift

- The church began as a minority movement, prepared to live differently to the world. High standards were expected of Christians.
- A few centuries later, Christianity was the state religion and everyone was a Christian. High standards were no longer expected of Christians and the church's way of life was now identical to the world's way of life.
- Yoder calls this shift 'Constantinianism', as the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity symbolises the shift.
- The alliance between state and church over the centuries since has watered down the church and discipleship and the challenge of Jesus to the status quo has been lost.

3. The Church's Life and Worship Embodies the Good News

- We don't follow the way of the cross alone. We are part of a new people, the church, which lives out the good news together.
- The practices of the church give the world a taste of the good news of the kingdom. In the church, old enemies like Jews and Greeks are made brothers and sisters. Food is shared between the rich and poor. Spiritual gifts are poured out on both the lowly and the important. Everyone is given a voice.

There are plenty of other themes we could choose to sum up Yoder's work. The three I chose reflect some of Yoder's original thinking. Yet much of his important work was done in re-reading history and theology in terms of these and other themes.

He also spent a lot of time engaging in conversations in other people's contexts and using their assumptions, in order to call them to greater consistency and to live up to the best in their own tradition. Thus, for example, in *When War is Unjust*, he calls people who believe in just war to live up to their own convictions and be ready to declare when a war is unjust according to just war criteria—which would probably be the case for all the wars fought since World War Two. These conversations are another valuable part of his contribution.

There's a good variety of approaches to Yoder in this issue, from the personal to the particular to the general. I hope you find it interesting.

On the Edge of Empire

President's Report

Doug Sewell, AAANZ President

The daily release of tens of thousands of confidential US government and embassy documents via the whistleblower website WikiLeaks is creating deep consternation for national leaders and governments as well as generating vitriolic rhetoric. Some are literally calling for the blood of WikiLeaks Australian director Julian Assange, to kill him 'in the same way as other high -value terrorist targets' and to 'neutralise (him) and his collaborators'.

The attempt by authorities to quarantine WikiLeaks and to freeze its accounts and credit facilities has started a huge public backlash. To protect the content of the WikiLeaks site from sabotage it has been independently mirrored over 1000 times on different servers in various countries and hackers have targeted MasterCard and PayPal databases. WikiLeaks highlights how easy it is in the internet age to destabilise the power base of authority. Crucial information is no longer the dominion of the few in charge but through the web become the province of the common person. The idea of *Wiki* (from the Hawaiian word for 'quick') is that information should be free, collaborative and easily disseminated.

American feminist, civil rights and anti war activist Robin Morgan wrote: 'Knowledge is power. Information is power. The secreting or hoarding of knowledge or information may be an act of tyranny camouflaged as humility.'

The explosion of information has some parallels with the revolutionary invention of the printing press in Germany when thousands of Bibles were distributed in the common language. The early Anabaptist movement caught on and spread quickly in this milieu. Bible knowledge became accessible to the laity and many questioned the established church's right to determine and control the word of God. The Anabaptist groups rejected the compromised political allegiances of the church hierarchy and instead patterned their life on what they could read about Jesus. The popular movement was perceived by the established church as a threat to its power and authority and the church response was swift and brutal. Yet the pogrom failed to stop the passionate groundswell of dissent that spawned more and more new groups.

Anabaptist author John Howard Yoder provides an ethical framework for keeping power and authority in check. He wrote: 'The biblical mandate...must not only explain that it is our duty to respect the powers that be, but also provide leverage for formulating the limits of that respect, and for articulating our resistance when those limits are overrun'.

The modern Anabaptist movement is made up of peace churches with a strong tradition of political dissent and social reform. However, Yoder was not content to make dissent the primary focus of reform; he directed the focus back on us. He said, 'The great reversal is not only the Lord's unseating of the mighty and raising the humble; it is also our own repentance.' The catalyst for effective change is for us to place ourselves at the heart of Christ's on-going revolutionary process of reconciliation and restoration; beginning at the edges with the marginalised in society.

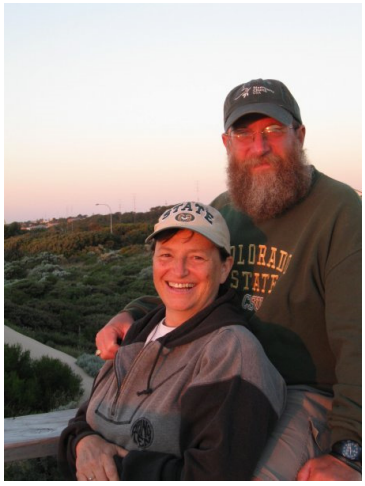
On the Edge of Empire is the very relevant theme of the 2011 Anabaptist Conference. The international gathering on 9-10 February is at Ngatiawa, a contemporary monastery set in a beautiful rural valley near Wellington, New Zealand. The keynote speaker is Stuart Murray Williams of the United Kingdom's Anabaptist Network. Stuart's expertise includes emerging churches, church planting, urban mission, mission after Christendom, and Anabaptist history and theology. He is the author of numerous books including *Post-Christendom* and recently *The Naked Anabaptist*. Passionfest will immediately follow the Anabaptist Conference for three more days of celebration and action packed workshops.

I invite you to come to the Conference to meet with other Anabaptists, to hear Stuart Murray Williams and also to join in afterwards at Passionfest. Be quick to secure early bird rates that end on 31 December. Go to www.anabaptist.asn.au for more details and to register. I hope to see you there.

The View From Ephesians 4

'To Prepare All God's people for the Work of Christian Service'

Mark and Mary Hurst, AAANZ staffworkers



We recently returned from a speaking trip in the USA. Over six weeks we spoke in eight Mennonite churches in three states. We were the "mission speakers" in these churches representing Mennonite Mission Network, the mission agency of the Mennonite Church USA.

Many North American Mennonite churches have "Mission Sundays" in October and November. For rural congregations it is often tied to harvest time and the songs sung in worship are thanksgiving songs praising God for a successful harvest. A connection is made between harvest time and world missions and churches often have their largest mission offerings during this period.

In several churches we sang:

> Come, ye thankful people, come! Raise the song of harvest home.
>
> All is safely gathered in ere the winter storms begin.
>
> God, our Maker, doth provide for our need to be supplied.
>
> Come to God's own temple come. Raise the song of harvest home.

Being with these churches reminded us about the rural roots of much of the Mennonite Church in the USA and the rhythm of life they still enjoy that is tied to life on the land. But in church after church when we asked "How many in your congregation still farm?" we learned that few still do. The days of the family farm are passing and being replaced by corporate farms. It will be interesting to see over time how this change affects the church and whether the connection to harvest and mission survives.

Our theme this year in our talks was "Neighbourhood Mission." We spoke from John 1 about how Jesus entered our "neighbourhood" as an act of incarnational mission and reconciliation and has called us to do the same where we live. We spoke about AAANZ and our attempt to flesh out the gospel in an Anabaptist way here in Oz and NZ.

While on our trip we learned that Stuart Murray's book *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* had become a "best-seller" for Herald Press. Churches in North America are using it in Sunday school classes to explore the roots of their faith. We told the churches we visited about our upcoming AAANZ Conference in NZ with Stuart as our main speaker. It was good to have this common link with American churches as we all try to follow Jesus.

For those who haven't yet read Stuart Murray's book, we have copies available from the AAANZ office. Better yet, join us in NZ in February and hear Stuart in person!

Reflections on John Howard Yoder

By Mark Hurst

I just did a quick count in my library and found nineteen books written by John Howard Yoder and five recent ones about him written by other authors. Obviously, Yoder's writings have been influential in my ethical and spiritual formation.

One of the first books I read in the early 1970's when I was discovering Anabaptism was *The Politics of Jesus*. His work influenced the writing of my Masters thesis on prison chaplaincy and my philosophy of missions. But in this reflection on Yoder I don't want to discuss his writings – others are doing a much better job of that. I want to write about times I met him or heard him speak.

There are numerous stories I've heard over the years about Yoder and his intellect. He evidently picked up other languages quickly and read and wrote fluently in these. I heard one story from someone who was in a small group with him at church. One night at a small gathering, people were going around the circle sharing about their lives. My friend said that Yoder was reading a thick German theological journal and was apparently not listening to what others were saying. But when it came to his turn to share, it was evident that he *did* hear what others were sharing and was able to process it while still reading his journal. He had the ability to do several things at once.

I saw this at a conference on the church and criminal justice. Yoder was there as a responder. I sat behind him during much of the conference. It appeared that he was not listening to what was being said from the platform by the different speakers. He was writing as quickly as he could filling page after page on his writing pad on something totally unrelated to the conference. I thought, "He doesn't have a clue about what is being discussed here." But when it was his time as responder to wrap up what was said during the conference and add his own thoughts, he did it brilliantly.

In the early 1980's I attended a talk given by Yoder at a university in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King Jr.'s hometown. Yoder was supposed to send his talk to three responders beforehand so they could read it and be ready to respond. For whatever reason he did not give them prepared remarks. He went on to give an excellent talk on King and his heritage. The responders were all caught off guard. They expected him to talk about *The Politics of Jesus* so they prepared their remarks around his famous book. None of them expected him to come into Atlanta, their home turf, and speak wisely about King. None of them were able to respond to his talk on the spot so they went ahead with their thoughts on his earlier book.

After our time in Atlanta with Mennonite Central Committee, we moved to Elkhart, Indiana so that I could study at the Mennonite seminary there. Yoder was leaving the seminary at the time and moving to a new position at Notre Dame, a half-hour drive from Elkhart. He was looking for some office space and the person we bought our house from had been talking with Yoder about using our basement for his temporary office. We thought it would be a wonderful idea. Maybe by having Yoder in our basement we might pick up some of his wisdom wafting through the floorboards.

He came to look at the space while we were moving in and had boxes sitting everywhere. The only thing he said to us was "Have you moved before?" We said "Often." He answered, "Well then, I don't pity you." He was a man of few words. (He found another space for his office so we never got to test our theory about wisdom and floorboards.)

We got to see Yoder in church and in the community at that time. His wife was Sunday school teacher for some of our children. Yoder spoke in some of my classes at seminary. My impression of him was always of someone with a great intellect – probably a genius – but awkward around people. Social skills did not appear to be his strong suit.

I remember Tom Sine once remarking that he was surprised to go into Mennonite churches and find that people were not reading Yoder. Many in those churches never heard of him. This has been our experience as well. Yoder touched many in seminary and university settings through his writings but his influence did not filter down to the average Mennonite in the pew. It remains the task of those of us who read Yoder to translate his work into our own settings – in our churches, communities, and universities.

on the EDGE of EMPIRE

WHEN: 9 - 10 FEBRUARY 2011
(Followed by Passionfest 2011: 11 - 13 Feb)

WHERE: NGATIAWA, a contemporary monastery inland from Waikanae, Kapiti Coast.

SPEAKER: STUART MURRAY WILLIAMS,
Dr, Anabaptist Network, UK.

PRESENTED BY THE ANABAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

"Out here on the edge
the empire is fading by the day
and the world is so weary in war
maybe we'll find that new way."
Dave Dobbyn - Welcome Home

THE CONFERENCE WILL EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE FAITHFULLY IN A POST-CHRISTENDOM CULTURE, WHAT NEW FORMS OF CHURCH ARE EMERGING IN THIS CONTEXT, AND THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF MISSION ON THE EDGE OF EMPIRE.

STUART MURRAY WILLIAMS,

Stuart consults with Christian leaders and practitioners of more than twenty denominations in many countries. His areas of expertise include emerging churches, church planting, urban mission, mission after Christendom, and Anabaptist history and theology. He is the author of numerous books including, Post-Christendom, and recently The Naked Anabaptist.

on the EDGE of EMPIRE SPONSORS:

Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand

URBAN VISION NZ

Enquiries: aaanz.conference@gmail.com

COSTS:

Early bird rates until 31.12.10	Early bird		After Jan 1	
Adults waged: Conference/meals	NZ$115	AU$92	NZ$130	AU$104
Unwaged/students: Conference/meals	NZ$75	AU$60	NZ$90	AU$72
Children 6 to 16 years: Meals only	-	-	NZ$10	AU$8
Infants to 5 years: Meals only			free	free

PAYMENT METHOD:

PayPal/credit card in Australian dollars or internet banking/cheque in NZ dollars
REGISTER ONLINE NOW:
https://www.groupsthatclick.com/anabaptist/conference.php

ACCOMMODATION

* On-site cabin - limited number available - pay on arrival - NZ$30 per person
* Homestay in nearby locality - contact aaanz.conference@gmail.com for availability and cost
* Arrange own at B&B, guest house or motel in nearby Waikanae (10km from Ngatiawa)
* On-site tent - bring you own tent and sleeping bag - free

STUART MURRAY WILLIAMS

"FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH AND MISSION IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD."

THURSDAY 10 FEB 2011, 7PM

WELLINGTON CENTRAL BAPTIST,
46-48 BOULCOTT ST, WELLINGTON.
No charge and parking available.

SPONSORED BY: ANABAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND, URBAN VISION & WELLINGTON CENTRAL BAPTIST

STUART consults with Christian leaders and practitioners of more than twenty denominations in many countries. His areas of expertise include emerging churches, church planting, urban mission, mission after Christendom, and Anabaptist history and theology. He is the author of numerous books including, Post-Christendom, and recently The Naked Anabaptist.

12 ways to prematurely write off Yoder

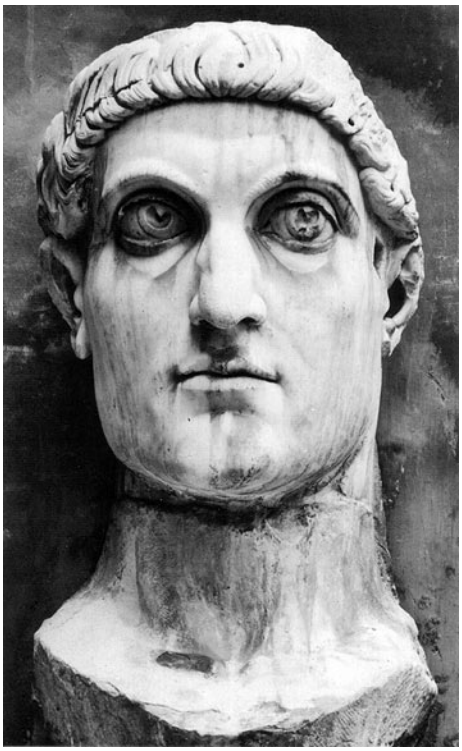
Some common misconceptions about Yoder's 'Neo-Anabaptist' vision

By Michael Buttrey

1. Yoder believes Constantine corrupted the church.

Yoder's references to the "so-called Constantinian transformation" and to "Constantinianism" are only a *shorthand* for the fusion (and confusion) of church and world made possible, but not inevitable, through changes around the time of Constantine. As he explains his terms: "I here use the name of Constantine merely as a label for this transformation, which began before A.D. 200 and took over 200 years; the use of his name does not mean an evaluation of his person or work." ("The Otherness of the Church," 57)

2. Yoder thinks that there was no salt or light in the medieval church.



1. Emperor Constantine

No, Yoder *affirms* the efforts in the Middle Ages to keep the church different and distinct from the world. He specifically highlights "the higher level of morality asked of the clergy, the international character of the hierarchy, the visibility of the hierarchy in opposition to the princes, the gradual moral education of barbarians into monogamy and legality, [and] foreign missions, apocalypticism and mysticism" as examples of how, despite distortions, the medieval church preserved an awareness of the strangeness of God's people and the visible otherness of the church. (Ibid., 58.)

3. Yoder hates Luther, Calvin and the other magisterial Reformers.

Yoder sees the Reformers as *unintentionally* complicit in many tragic developments including secularization and the creation of modern secularism. He affirms their view of secular vocations as divinely ordained, their attempts to instruct and humble the state, their intent to renew the visible, faithful body of believers, and especially their faith in the all-powerful Word of God. His primary complaint is simply that "the forces to which they appealed for support, namely the drive towards autonomy that exists in the state and the other realms of culture, were too strong to be controlled once they had been let loose." (Ibid., 60.)

4. Yoder has a low view of God's sovereignty over history. Or:

5. He idolizes the early church.

Actually, Yoder has a much higher view of God's sovereignty than those who believe it is *our* responsibility to make sure history turns out right. Indeed, he sees one of the fundamental movements of Constantinianism as the switch from faith in God's rule to faith in the invisibility of the church. Consider his words in "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics":

> Before Constantine, one knew as a fact of everyday experience that there was a believing Christian community but one had to 'take it on faith' that God was governing history. After Constantine, one had to believe without seeing that there was a community of believers within the larger nominally Christian mass, but one knew for a fact that God was in control of history. (137)

7. Wars of Joshua

In another important essay, he makes it clear that his criticism of the past is not a rebuke to God's guidance of the church, but to the Enlightenment dogma of univocal progress: "reference … to the early centuries is not made with a view to undoing the passage of time but with a view to properly reorienting our present movement forward in light of what we now know was wrong with the way we had been going before." ("The Kingdom as Social Ethic," 87)

6. Yoder inappropriately sees Jesus' earthly life as normative.

In *The Politics of Jesus* Yoder politely refuses the mendicant tradition of continuing Jesus' footlooseness, poverty, or celibacy. He argues there is 'no general concept of living like Jesus' in the New Testament, and observes how Paul never claims Jesus as his example for, say, remaining single or working with his hands (130). Rather, there is only *one* realm where we must imitate Jesus, the way repeated throughout the New Testament and anticipated by the prophets: his relation to enmity and power, as typified by the cross. 'Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness replaces hostility,' not only for individuals, but also for the powers and structures of society (131). The rest of the 1972 book demonstrates and unpacks this broader vision of Jesus in ways well-supported by later scholars.

7. Yoder fails to deal with the Old Testament, especially the wars of Joshua.

On the contrary, in *The Original Revolution* Yoder disavows superficial approaches to reconciling the two Testaments. He rejects most such standard tropes, including claims that Jesus abolished the law and began a new dispensation, that God made concessions to Israel's disobedience or immaturity, or that the Old Testament is normative for civil order and the New is concerned only with individual relationships. (92-99) Instead, he insists the wars must be understood in their ancient Near East historical context and narrative direction. His final word on holy war is in *The War of the Lamb*: 'Yahweh himself gives the victory.' From Exodus to Judges, 'victory is a miracle,' either because 'the Israelites do not fight at all' or because 'their contribution is not decisive.' (69) So, *only* 'if wars today were commanded by prophets and won by miracles would the wars of Yahweh be a pertinent example.' (70) Indeed, from Judges through Jeremiah, the Davidic kingship and standing military is revealed as a failure to trust Yahweh, and by the second century Judaism has rejected the violence of the Maccabees and Zealots' as mistakes also. (72-3)

Therefore, the pacifism of today need not do 'violence' to OT interpretation but can proudly stand in continuity with the development of prophetic and rabbinic thought. Ironically, then, it is not Yoder but

those who claim the OT for a pro-war position who need to answer charges of supercessionism, for they typically ignore the reception of their chosen texts by the rest of the Hebrew Bible and subsequent Jewish tradition.

8. Yoder's pacifism inhibits any effective witness to the state, especially regarding war.

Actually, Yoder's aptly titled *The Christian Witness to the State* shows him to be as tough-minded and practical as any follower of Reinhold Niebuhr.

Consider: Yoder is convinced 'the present aeon is characterized by sin,' and agrees that 'we cannot expect the social order at large to function without the use of force.' (9, 6) Therefore, our witness 'will not be guided by an imagined pattern of ideal society,' but will speak of specific criticisms and 'specific suggestions for improvements to remedy the identified abuse,' which, if implemented, will be followed by 'new and more demanding' critiques and proposals. (32; compare 67-8, where Yoder lauds Niebuhr for formulating this always relevant yet never-satisfied approach.) So, the church must refuse to bless the idolatrous modern crusade mentality, where one nation or bloc pretends to be utterly benevolent. Instead, we should advocate 'a controlled balance of power.' (45) The church can also demand that the state conduct war according to the traditional just war criteria, which do not make war 'just' for the Christian but do usefully describe the uses of violence that are the least illegitimate. (49)

11, 12 Stanley Hauerwas

9.Even for Christians, Yoder's pacifism is impossible, or at least irresponsible.

Yoder fully recognizes that 'Christian ethics calls for behaviour which is impossible except by the miracles of the Holy Spirit' – but unlike many so-called Christian 'realists', Yoder believes in the *real* power of regeneration and participation in Christ. (*The Original Revolution*, 121)

Consider how he criticizes Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*: 'The body of Christ differs from other social bodies in that it is *not* less moral than its individual members. *If* being a perfectly loyal American ... makes a man less loving that he would be as individual, the contrary is true of being a member of Christ.' (*The Royal Priesthood*, 19. My emphasis.) In other words, the real connection between the church and its head enables Christians to do what they otherwise cannot, because they can have 'the resources of love, repentance, the willingness to sacrifice, and enabling the power of the Holy Spirit.' (*The Christian Witness to the State*, 29) As for accusations of irresponsibility, Yoder is deeply concerned by how such arguments actually function. Behind the rhetoric, 'responsibility signifies a commitment to consider the survival, interests, or the power of one's own nation, state, or class as taking priority over the survival, interests, or power of other persons or groups, of all humanity, of the 'enemy,' or of the church.' (Ibid., 36n1) Thus, to Yoder calls for 'Christian responsibility' are really a form of disguised egoism, not altruism.

10. Yoder advocates separation from the world that 'God so loved.' And:

11. Isn't Yoder a 'fideistic sectarian tribalist' like Stanley Hauerwas?

These common accusations seriously misunderstand Yoder.

First, Yoder's context was one where he was urging traditionally quietist Anabaptists to realize they had a social ethic and witness to society, while simultaneously calling activist Christians to realize they need

not abandon the gospel and take up the methods of the world in their impatience to get things done. Ironically, Yoder has often been taken more seriously by theologians and political philosophers outside his tradition – such as Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles – than those on the 'inside.'

Second, Yoder has no desire to divide the church further. Indeed, in "The Kingdom As Social Ethic" he deeply objects to the labelling of radically obedient groups as sectarian, for they had no intentions of separating themselves:

> [Such groups] have called upon all Christians to return to the ethic to which they themselves were called. They did not agree that their position was only for heroes, or only possible for those who would withdraw from wider society. They did not agree to separate themselves as more righteous from the church at large. (85)

Third, Yoder is fundamentally not interested in withdrawal or separation from society. In "The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," Yoder agrees with Karl Barth that 'what believers are called to is no different from what all humanity is called to. … To confess that Jesus Christ is Lord makes it inconceivable that there should be any realm where his writ would not run.' (25) Of course, those who seriously see Christ's commands as normative for all tend to be called fideists or theocrats. Yoder is neither.

Yoder is not a fideist because, unlike most realists, he sees the gospel as having a *truly* universal appeal. Christian realists typically assume that the gospel is inaccessible and incomprehensible to all other groups, and so it is necessary to use a neutral, 'public' language to oblige non-Christians 'to assent to our views on other grounds than that they are our views.' (16-7) Indeed, it is not Yoder but his critics who tend to think that their faith is fundamentally irrational and its public demands must be set aside for that reason. This reverse fideism is not surprising, however, given how modern liberal democracies understand religious groups and language.

Further, Yoder is not a theocrat, because he does not call for the violent imposition of the gospel, which would be an oxymoron. Rather, the challenge for the church is to purify its witness so 'the world can perceive it to be good news without having to learn a foreign language.' (24) Christ's universal lordship obliges the church to make great demands of the world, but by definition, the gospel witness is a process of public dialogue, not coercion.

In short, the best word for Yoder's understanding of the church's witness to society is that of *model*. Consider some of these potential imperatives for civil society Yoder derives theologically in that same essay:

- egalitarianism, not because it is self-evident (history suggests that it is clearly not!) but because baptism into one body breaks down ethnic and cultural barriers;
- forgiveness as commanded by Christ (he agrees with Hannah Arendt that a religious origin and articulation for forgiveness is no reason to discount it in secular contexts);
- radical sharing and hospitality, even voluntary socialism, as implied in the Eucharist; and

open public meetings and dialogue, as Paul instructed the Corinthians.

This sketch is almost a political "platform," and hardly separatist. But for Christians with typical approaches to politics, Yoder's call for the church to be where God's vision for society is first implemented and practiced is an enormous stumbling block. It is yet another irony that realists are so often closet quietists: they see the only choice as being between transforming society and letting it go its own way. Yoder, however, asks us to obey Christ even if no one else is interested – although he trusts that the Kingdom will advance if the word of God is faithfully witnessed and embodied amid the powers and principalities of the world.

12. Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas are the same.

Let me put it this way. If you are concerned that Hauerwas has an anti-liberal, 'church as polis' narrative ecclesiology, you must read Yoder's *The Royal Priesthood, The Priestly Kingdom, For the Nations* and the often-overlooked *Body Politics*. If you are frustrated by Hauerwas' less-frequent engagement of the biblical text, you must read Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* and *The War of the Lamb*. But if, like me, you deeply appreciate Hauerwas' work, then you, too, should read Yoder and discover his project, similar yet hardly identical.

Yoder on Jesus' Death

By Geoff Broughton

John Howard Yoder argued that Jesus' teaching on enemy-love is the only ethical issue where Jesus' disciples are told they will be like their Heavenly Father. This makes love for one's enemies the clearest articulation of the radical nature of Jesus' message. Jesus' enemy-love is never less than a commitment to non-violence, because without this commitment, the adversarial cycles of revenge, retaliation and retribution remain. The pivotal question is whether the life, death and resurrection of Jesus require more than non-violence in the face of wrongdoing and enmity. In this article, I will examine Yoder's writings on Jesus' death which have not, in my judgment, received as much critical treatment as his work on Jesus' life.

The depth of enemy-love is demonstrated in Jesus' death where Jesus not only rejects violence as an option, but also identifies with wrongdoers. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus dies alongside wrongdoers; his death is *for* wrongdoers. In reading Luke like this, I will part company with Yoder in several significant respects. Yoder asserts that the way Jesus lived and the teaching he proclaimed necessitated crucifixion *by* his enemies. According to Yoder, Jesus' death constituted God's will. But Yoder fails to demonstrate how a commitment to non-violence alone makes sense of the New Testament's perspective that Jesus' died *for* his enemies.[1] The error of forcing biblical accounts of Jesus' death into a nonviolent hermeneutic is evident in the limitation of Yoder's interpretation of Jesus' death to political reasons (*by* his enemies), that deliberately excludes theological reasons (*for* his enemies). I will survey Yoder's writings for his interpretation of Jesus' death, before briefly concluding with Luke's own account of Jesus' death.

John Howard Yoder and the death of Jesus

Yoder's principal contribution to New Testament scholarship was to take seriously the biblical witness to the earthly, political life and teaching of Jesus for ethical reflection and action.[2] Yoder's central claim is sound: Jesus' teaching on enemy-love must be normative for Christian ethics,[3] because it is the only command where the disciples are told they will be like their Father.[4] Another implication of Yoder's focus on the earthly, political life of Jesus is the interpretative lens the life of Jesus provides for viewing the death of Jesus.[5] The love Jesus demonstrated for the enemy by his death is not merely a heroic example nor 'love of neighbor raised to the nth degree'. Yoder

explains that 'enemy love – the cross as a way of life and of death – is participation in redemption. It is 'the "key to the gospel" in a far deeper way than Tolstoy had in mind when he used that phrase.'[6] Yoder rightly rejects any interpretation of Jesus' death that leaps, 'like the creed, from the birth of Jesus to the cross.'[7]

The simple statement that 'Jesus died for us' has been understood as satisfaction for wrongdoing (following Anselm's line).[8] But Yoder raises a number of exegetical, theological and practical objections to Anselm's interpretation of Jesus' death and considers those who employ the language of 'Christ paying the price for our guilt' (citing Barth and Brunner) as abandoning 'theological responsibility'.[9] This is a serious charge. Yoder criticises the exclusive use of the 'judicial' symbolism of the courtroom in which everyone, by definition, is a wrongdoer and God the judge.[10] Throughout his writings and in addressing this problem, Yoder treats the relationship between the life and death of Jesus indirectly by employing several themes. They include a theology of reconciliation;[11] an ethic of subordination (innocent suffering);[12] an ethic of discipleship, and, an eschatology centered on Christ's lordship (disarming the powers[13] and the war of the Lamb).[14]

There is little doubt that the 'cross' is central to Yoder's thinking and writing.[15] Yoder's *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* contains his most extensive evaluation of the atonement as one of the threefold offices of Christ – the 'priest'.[16] In this collection of lectures spanning more than thirty years, Yoder offers even-handed descriptions and short critiques of dominant approaches to atonement in Christian theology. Consistent with his treatment of Jesus' death elsewhere in his writings, he appears more confident of what should be rejected in atonement theology than what ought to be embraced.[17] In constructing a positive alternative, Yoder is clear about what a positive interpretation of Jesus' death requires: 'the first thing the doctrine of the atonement must do is answer the question, "Why did Jesus have to die?" The second thing it must do is to do justice to all the biblical language'.[18] To achieve these goals requires more than a simple repetition of the biblical language but rather the systematization of the various New Testament ideas, images and metaphors for Jesus' death. All systematised theories and interpretations ultimately fail, however, because they are abstractions from both the gospel narratives and human experience.[19] As McClendon helpfully reminds us, 'the metaphors are nothing without the narratives in which they came to life'; otherwise the resulting theories and interpretations of the atonement become mere fodder for scholarly debates. Yoder's own assessment of the scholarly debate is bleak, concluding that 'argument about the atonement is at present at a standstill'.[20] For Yoder, salvation is reconciliation (re-establishment of communion) and obedience. Effectively, it is inseparable from discipleship.[21] Yoder's emphasis is predicated on an evaluation of how those in this 'lost condition' are saved in the Gospel of Luke, especially through Jesus' death. Luke was Yoder's primary New Testament source for understanding Jesus' life, death and resurrection.[22] As previously noted, Jesus' 'counter-intuitive imperative of enemy love' grew in importance for Yoder as he gradually came to see it as the key to understanding Jesus' life and teaching.[23] When it comes to Luke's account of Jesus' death, Yoder identifies the continuity between kingdom and cross which, in characteristically Lucan terms, means, 'we are not called to love our enemies in order to make them our friends. We are called to act out love for them because at the cross it has been effectively proclaimed that from all eternity they were our brothers and sisters'.[24] In an essay published in the year of his death (1997), Yoder's continuing preoccupation with the Roman and political dimensions of Jesus' death is enlarged to include reasons for 'Jesus' acceptance of the cross' which 'was not, in the first analysis, a moral decision, but an eschatological one…. or, we may say it was an ontological decision.'[25] Yoder explains that Jesus' vision of God's future, 'a truer picture of what the world *really is*' is the divine necessity for Jesus' death on a cross. '[I]f Jesus, accepting the cross, is the icon of the invisible God, then our participation in that same love is at the heart of the transformation of humankind into that same image… the cruciform life works because it goes with the grain of the universe.'[26] Yoder's understanding of Jesus' death through the theme of discipleship – the most common in his writings – makes the relative strengths and weaknesses of Yoder's interpretation of Jesus' death clearer.

The theme of discipleship is Yoder's preferred means of explicating what participation in Jesus' death means for lost humanity.[27] The deep and complex relationship in Yoder's thought between the metaphorical meaning of *ho stauros* ('the cross')[28] and its more specific use for Jesus' death (on the cross) is also drawn from Luke.[29] The recovery of the historical and political meaning of cross-bearing for Jesus' followers is a microcosm of Yoder's approach to understanding the New Testament portrayal of Jesus.[30] In the final work published while he was alive, Yoder summarises his interpretation of Luke's use of *stauros*:

> The other word for the cost of following is "the cross." By the time Luke wrote his Gospel, he and his readers of course knew about Jesus' own death; yet for the account of Jesus

> speaking to the crowd, that meaning cannot be assumed. What the cross then had to mean was what the practice of crucifixion by the Roman army already meant in that setting, namely, as the specific punishment for insurrection. Followers of Jesus, he warns them, must be ready to be seen and to be treated as rebels, as was going to happen to him.[31]

The cross, interpreted by Yoder as a 'synonym for discipleship' in Luke's gospel, simultaneously highlights both the strengths and the weaknesses of Yoder's understanding of this pivotal New Testament event. Against the 'spiritualisers', Yoder insists that Jesus' death was an historical event that took place at the hands of the political (and religious) powers. Yoder argues persuasively that in Luke's gospel *stauros* has a significant theological and ethical meaning - discipleship. Whereas some contemporary readers are tempted to substitute the phrase 'theory of atonement' for *stauros,* Luke wants his readers to understand the cross as the only way of faithfully *following* Jesus.

While it is true that Jesus' first hearers could not have anticipated his death on a Roman cross, it is also true that Luke's audience could not have made sense of Jesus' death by any other means. Yoder's appeal to the likely understanding of *stauros* by Jesus' hearers prior to his death and resurrection – where *stauros* simply means the 'Roman form of death for rebels' – is not persuasive.[32] Why would Luke bother mentioning the *form* of Jesus' death as the symbol of discipleship prior to his actual death on a cross if the latter does not serve to interpret the former? Yoder's identification of the cross as the symbol of discipleship loses its broader and deeper force and effect if it simply means 'a rebel's death.' Yoder concedes that the cross 'had to mean' both cost and punishment. Yoder does not offer any grounds to explain why the *historical* meaning of the cross as cost and punishment cannot be assumed as dimensions of Luke's theological use of *stauros*.[33] Yoder appears inconsistent on the point of Luke's theological use of *stauros.* If Luke can draw theological implications of *stauros* for discipleship, then it must be assumed that Luke draws theological implications of *stauros* in relation to the reasons for Jesus' death. But it is precisely this crucial theological dimension of Jesus' death (such as punishment, cost or expense) that Yoder appears to ignore in Luke's gospel.

Yoder's interpretation of Jesus' death indeed offers a helpful corrective to the tendencies of the 'spiritualisers' who force Luke's story into more abstract theories and spiritual metaphors. Jesus' life and his teaching of enemy-love is a crucial aspect of Luke's wider narrative of Jesus' passion which is, in my view, properly emphasised by Yoder. But Yoder effectively severs the connection between the discipleship of the cross and participation in Jesus' suffering and death with the necessity of being 'served by the Servant for the forgiveness of sins *and then* commissioned to serve.'[34] In his commentary on Luke 22:23-27, Eduard Schweizer demonstrates that in the Lucan narrative, being served *must* precede service. He draws attention to 'Jesus' serving, now illustrated in the context of the meal but also determinative of his entire life and death, as the basis for the service of the disciples.'[35] Yoder does not demonstrate how reconciliation, discipleship and revolutionary subordination can be faithfully embodied apart from the forgiveness of sins. In contrast with their prominence in the Lucan narrative, Yoder is virtually silent on Jesus' prayer of forgiveness (23:34) and his words of assurance to the criminal crucified at his side (23:39-43) in his interpretation of Jesus' death. Neither does Luke's emphasis on Jesus commissioning his disciples to proclaim the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name feature prominently in Yoder's 'discipleship' of the cross.[36]

These are serious omissions. In neglecting the Lucan emphasis on the forgiveness of sins, Yoder excludes the New Testament's teaching on the fact of Jesus' suffering death *on our behalf.* Participation in the cross – something that Yoder wants to emphasise together with the related themes of reconciliation, discipleship, and subordination – is distinguished from forgiveness and salvation. Consequently, the cross cannot be the deepest fulfillment of the role of the Servant as promised by Isaiah.[37] Yoder's somewhat selective engagement with the Lucan account of Jesus' death is more even more apparent when compared with the work of Massyngberde Ford who shared Yoder's commitment to the non-violence of Jesus in Luke's gospel but who deals with Luke's narrative of Jesus' death more comprehensively.[38] I suspect that Yoder's continuing dialogue with and against Jesus' interpretative 'spiritualisers' weakened his explication of Jesus' death as a necessary (Gk. *dei* cf. Luke 13:33 with Acts 9:16) part of God's purposes (Gk. *boulea* see Luke 7:30; 23:51 and Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38; 13:36; 20:27).[39]

Yoder's account of Jesus' death at the hand of his political enemies is inadequate because it fails to demonstrate theological reasons for Jesus' death *for* his enemies, which would show God's solidarity with criminals and wrongdoers.[40] Contemporary social interpretations of Jesus' death require the rigor advocated by Yoder – a continuing engagement between exegesis and ethics. I believe that restorative justice encourages this approach.[41] The lens of restorative justice interprets Jesus' death for victims *and* wrongdoers, where forgiveness is made available to wrong-

doers, enemies are reconciled and victims become healers.

Conclusion: The story of Jesus' death in Luke-Acts

Luke's story gives priority to wrongdoers and their interactions with Jesus. At the cross, Luke's identifies and names the following in the drama of Jesus' death: the two *kakourgos* ('criminals'), those who cast lots for his garments (presumably soldiers), *ho laos theoœroœn* (the bystanders), *archontes* ('rulers') the ones who scoffed,[42] *hoi stratioœtai* ('soldiers') the ones who join in the mocking, the inscription also intended as ridicule (attributed to Pilate), *ho hekatontarcheœs* (the centurion) and, finally, *hoi gnoœstoi* (literally the 'known ones') and *gynaikes hai synakolouthousai autoœ* ('the women following him') although standing at a distance. [43] For Luke, the meaning of Jesus' death lies in the context of the characters and the dialogue that he has selected to describe it. Luke's primary concern with wrongdoers is also illustrated in the meditations on Jesus' seven last words from the cross.

The familiar Good Friday reflections on Jesus' words are taken from all four gospel accounts of Jesus' death. The first, second and seventh words are from Luke's gospel (23:34, 43 and 46) and are unique to it.[44] The first and last are prayers (both are addressed to God as Father), the first and second words concern wrongdoers (a word of forgiveness and a word of promise). Any interpretation of Jesus' death that fails to reckon with its meaning for wrongdoers neglects Luke's own clear emphasis.[45] Yet, Luke's narrative is not complete without attending to the place of victims.

The central character for Luke is Jesus. He is the innocent and willing victim. Those remaining at the place of Jesus' crucifixion until his death are different from the other characters present in Luke's account. At the very least, the women and known ones do not function primarily as wrongdoers and must be taken into account in any credible interpretation of Luke's understanding of Jesus' death. Throughout Luke, salvation includes the liberation, healing and restoration promised to prisoners (wrongdoers) and the poor, blind and oppressed (victims). For Luke, Jesus is primarily fulfilling the promises God made through the prophet Isaiah. The culmination of this saving work of God-in-Christ is the death of Jesus on the cross.

In conclusion, Luke presents his distinctive account of Jesus' death with attention to two prominent features. The first, Luke's *relational* emphasis, is evident in conversations between Jesus and the mourning women on the way to his crucifixion, and between Jesus and the two wrongdoers on the cross.[46] The second, the *theological* dimensions of Luke's story including the divine will, forgiveness and deliverance, are apparent in prayers spoken by Jesus at Gethsemane and from the cross to God the Father. Building on Paul's assertion that it was 'God, who through Christ, reconciled us to himself' (2 Cor. 5:18), Luke also considers what Jesus' death might mean for the victims of wrongdoing. Considering the place of victims, however, does not deny the prominence given to wrongdoers in either Luke's account of Jesus' death or the New Testament more generally ('in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them' 2 Cor. 5:19).[47]

[1] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002), p. 308 insists on the presupposition that 'the belief that nonresistance is part of the essential nature of agape of God's way of dealing with evil' which highlights God's basic conundrum in reconciling humanity to himself through Jesus death: 'How, in short, to reveal love to us without forcing it upon us, which forcing would contradict love?' Yoder's dilemma – in stark contrast with some who claim to have inherited his 'mantle' – is that he would not permit any interpretation of Christ's death that 'distorted the biblical imagery.' Yoder consistently demanded any interpretation of Jesus' death 'be consonant with the Bible'.

[2] Yoder and Gorman, *To Hear the Word* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), pp. 186, 9 where he aligns his approach with both the 'biblical theology movement… [in which] texts have a right to be heard on their own terms... because they do address their readers in a way that demands a response of a specifiable kind to a message we do not hear elsewhere' as well as a 'biblical realism… [that is] post-critical, not pre-critical… [which] arose out of self-critical awareness of the limits of the prevalent literary and historical methodologies. It is especially concerned to keep its own interpretative filters from screening out part of what the text really says.'

[3] Murphy. "John Howard Yoder's Systematic Defense of Christian Pacifism," in *The New Yoder* (ed. Huebner; Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), p. 45 agrees with this assessment: 'I venture to sum up Yoder's program as follows: "The moral character of God is revealed in Jesus's vulnerable enemy love and renunciation of dominion. Imitation of Jesus in this regard constitutes a social ethic." I shall take this to be the hard core of Yoder's theology'.

[4] Yoder, et al., *The War of the Lamb : The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2009), p. 79 'Jesus says that by loving their enemies his disciples will be like their heavenly father. This is said of no other ethical issue.' See also Yoder, *The Original Revolution : Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottdale: Herald Pr., 1971), p. 47 and Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 117.

[5] Horsley. "The Death of Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus* (ed. Chilton; Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 395 notes that 'interpretations of Jesus in general (usually books) have tended to give little attention to (Gospel portrayals of) events in Jerusalem; and treatments of particular (Gospel portrayals of) incidents connected with the death of Jesus have paid little attention to Jesus' overall context, teaching, and activity.'

[6] Yoder, et al., *The War of the Lamb : The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, p. 177.

[7] Yoder, et al., *Nonviolence - a Brief History : The Warsaw Lectures* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 91 adding 'his teachings and his social and political involvement will be of little interest and not binding for us'. See also Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 304 where he critiques the interest in Jesus' life that is solely 'theological' so that 'the only obedience that is required from him is that he committed no sin, but "blamelessness" is certainly a very thin kind of description of the way in which the life of Jesus can be called obedience.' A contemporary example of this reduction of Jesus' life to his faithfulness or obedience is the biblical theology of atonement by Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), pp. 103-19 which includes the biblical witness of Hebrews, Revelation, and Paul but entirely neglects the witness of the four gospels!

[8] Moule. "The Scope of the Death of Christ," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation : And Other New Testament Themes*; London: SPCK, 1998), pp. 10-1 while disagreeing with certain dimensions of 'satisfaction' explanations, examines the use of the Greek prepositions '*huper* with person and *peri* with sins' and must conclude that 'with this list before us, we ask what, if anything, marks these Christian uses of the 'on behalf of' formulae as distinctive, one feature, at least, is impressively persistent. This is the universality - or, at least, potential universality - assumed for the effects of the death of Christ'.

[9] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, pp. 301-4, 5 although he does concede that they employ such language 'in the full awareness of its limits.' Given his theological debt to Barth and Eduard Schweizer, and his ecumenical efforts with evangelicals, it is surprising to find that Yoder did not engage with reformed theology's more nuanced interpretation of Jesus' death as substitutionary atonement. Yoder does considers the 'logic of solidarity' or 'federal headship' as 'the resources to use more extensively' in developing this line of interpretation. Conversely, the charge of abandoning 'theological irresponsibility' might also be leveled at those who reduce to 'Anselmic' New Testament themes of Jesus' death as representation, headship, solidarity and substitution

[10] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 304 where he notes the following problems: 'all the other doctrines, the older doctrines, are much less tied to a particular model of thought - although each has its own particular model - and are less narrow and less culturally limited.' More significant is Yoder's criticism of an exclusively juridical view is that 'it gives us a vision of God as a judge rather than as a reconciling and loving Father**.** It does not fit with the entire biblical stance'. In this claim Yoder finds agreement with defenders of substitutionary atonement from its recent (mostly nonviolent atonement) critics. One such defender is Cole who, in *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom*, p.35, agrees that 'how then we construe God's character is of utmost importance'.

[11] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 310 'we can now state the problem atonement must solve. That is, we can now define the state of lostness. Humanity, created for free communion with God and obedience in communion has turned freedom, this gift of God's love, inside out so that God's love lets us go as we choose. The question now is how God can bring humanity back into communion and obedience, that is, how can God save (as an expression of agape) and at the same time leave humanity free (also an expression of agape), which must include respecting the hold to human sinfulness.'

[12] Yoder, et al., *The War of the Lamb : The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, p. 41 'Jesus chose the cross as an alternative social strategy of strength not weakness. As Paul would write a generation later, it was God's wisdom and power, what God ultimately does about violence. What I referred to above as "doing without dominion"… the gospel is not so much about delegitimising violence so much as about overcoming it… innocent suffering.... [is the] virtue of the special restorative resources of forgiveness and community.'

[13] Yoder, et al., *The War of the Lamb : The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, p. 81 'Jesus Christ disobeys the powers, disarms them, and saves us from their enslavement by dying at their hands. He thereby tames them and makes them useable in the service of human dignity'.

[14] Yoder, "The Politics of Jesus Revisited," (Toronto Mennonite Studies Center, 1997), 3-6 identifies these as the major themes of his work. In revisiting these themes in the 25 years since the original publication Yoder rejects the pigeon-holing of his writing through association with such themes by friends and critics alike, citing 'the response of Richard Mouw, a well-intentioned Calvinist friend… even though most of the sources I cited were from mainstream Lutheran and Reformed NT scholars, Mouw put me in the pigeonhole he had already labeled "Anabaptist," which the Reformed creeds until recently instructed him to "despise," rather than attending to my reading of the texts. Mouw would believe in principle in respecting an appeal to scripture, though he did not attend to that in his response to me'.

[15] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, pp. 95, 129 'only at one point, only on one subject - but then consistently, universally - is Jesus our example: in his cross' and 'the cross of Calvary... was the political legally-to-be-expected result of a moral clash with the powers ruling society'.

[16] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 284 where he immediately notes that 'a brief detour is needed on vocabulary. The root of the word "atonement" seems to have been authentically the still visible English derivation from the composition, "at-one-ment," meaning literally (a) "to bring I back into oneness"… then the linguistic equivalent would be "reunion" or · "reunification," and the semantic equivalent would be "reconciliation"… The "better" term "reconciliation" is just now also under a cloud in some circles, because in the judgment of some theologians of liberation it has been used to cloak the *avoidance of confrontation and social change.'* (Original emphasis).

[17] This is Yoder's 'anomaly' according to Murphy. "John Howard Yoder's Systematic Defense of Christian Pacifism,"), p. 58 in which 'the anomaly here is the sacrificial language used in the New Testament to interpret the death of Jesus. This language has led to the development of theories of the work of Christ that are at least different from Yoder's interpretation, and in some cases actually opposed to it'.

[18] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 288.

[19] McClendon, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology. Vol. 2* (Nashville Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 226 asks 'before we resign ourselves to a hopeless intrabiblical war of metaphors, we must ask if development into contending theories is the proper function of these texts'. Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 303 makes his critique even stronger: 'The Christian's "cross" neither placates an offended holiness nor is the Christian's suffering a transaction with the Father. Unless the work of Christ has an ethical sense, this whole strand of New Testament thought has no place to fit in. This explains why in preaching about the Christian life many proponents of the Anselmic view abandon it in practice if not in theory'.

[20] Yoder critiques both historical and contemporary interpretations of Jesus' death in terms of their failure to bring together sound biblical exegesis (avoiding being drawn into the abstract theories of theological debates) and relational and social ethics (avoiding the flight into mysticism). Rather than the focus on sin as guilt (the essence of most 'satisfaction' theories), Yoder argues that the New Testament provides 'two other foci of interest that define the lost condition: separation from God and incapacity to do the good'. Thus, salvation is not primarily the remission of guilt or the cancellation of punishment. See further Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 298 adding 'On one hand, the exegetes, without having an adequate substitute, are sure of one thing, namely that the Anselmic view is not biblical. We shall see their rea-

sons in detail later. On the other hand, the theologians (apart from the fundamentalists who never left him) are swinging back to Anselm from the humanistic views of a generation ago, blithely paying no attention to the exegetes. Some exegetes and theologians therefore attempt to get along without clear answers, fleeing into sacramentalism, mysticism, or existentialism. This is possible for preachers and monks, but not for theologians or ethicists'.

[21] Yoder, *Preface to Theology : Christology and Theological Method*, p. 300.

[22] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, pp. 21-59 and Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 199-218 and Yoder, et al., *Nonviolence - a Brief History : The Warsaw Lectures*, pp. 85-96 are just three examples that could be cited from his entire corpus of sustained explorations of Luke's Jesus.

[23] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, p. 59, note 74. cf. Yoder, et al., *Nonviolence - a Brief History : The Warsaw Lectures*, p. 89 and Yoder, et al., *The War of the Lamb : The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, p. 177.

[24] Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*, p. 211 where he adds, that would surprise many who share his commitment to nonviolence, 'it is thus a profound misapprehension of the messianic moral choice to think that in his rejection of violence, Jesus was led by methodological purism in moral choice, choosing to be an absolutist about the sacredness of life. It would be an equally profound misapprehension to think that he was the world's first Gandhian, calculating the prospects for a social victory as being in his particular circumstances greater for nonviolent than for violent tactics'.

[25] Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*, p. 211. Cf. his earlier focus Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, pp. 48-9 where his argument is with 'spiritualistic-apologetic exegesis has always emphasized that the Jews, or the Romans, or the Zealot-minded disciples, had Jesus all wrong; he never really meant to bother the established order'. Instead, Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution* (ed. Alexis-Baker; Grand Rapids, : Brazos Press, 2009), p. 314 asserts 'the first thing to say about the biblical picture is that Jesus is a public figure. He uses political language. The authorities perceive him as a political threat and put him to death because of it... it is clear, hypocritically or honestly, that the legal basis for his crucifixion in the Roman record books was the charge that he was an insurrectionist. That charge is the reason for an inscription on the cross, reported in all four Gospels. He was accused of being the king of the Jews... that accusation was the formal ground for his execution'.

[26] Yoder, et al., *The War of the Lamb : The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, pp. 177, 9.

[27] Here Yoder's arguments would be strengthened by a deeper engagement with Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM, 1959), p. 134 who also argued that 'the love for our enemies takes us along the way of the cross and into fellowship with the Crucified.' In Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (ed. Bethge; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 303. faith in the Crucified enables us to take 'distance' from our own immediacy and take into ourselves the tension-filled polyphony of life, instead of pressing life to 'a single dimension'... the faith in Jesus Christ, who made our cause his cause, frees us from pursuing our interests only, and creates in us the space for the interests of others. In Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 135 the disciple's way of the cross and participation in the Crucified Christ mean that 'the disciple can now perceive that even his enemy is the object of God's love, and that he stands like himself beneath the cross of Christ.' Once again Bonhoeffer sought to find the practical meaning of this solidarity by asking, 'how does this quality work out in practice?' His answer? 'This activity itself is ceaseless suffering. In it the disciple endures the suffering of Christ.' But even 'suffering' can be interpreted as an abstract principle, so in Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 361-2 writing from the midst of his own suffering in prison he adds, 'this being caught up into the messianic sufferings of God in Jesus Christ takes a variety of forms in the New Testament. It appears in the call to discipleship, in Jesus' table fellowship with sinners ... in the act of the woman who was sinner (Luke 7)… in Jesus' acceptance of children.' Before and beyond any of these New Testament forms, however, Bonhoeffer never tired of returning to Jesus and his Sermon on the Mount.

[28] Lk. 14:27 'Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple'

[29] Lk. 23:26 'And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus'

[30] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, pp. 127, 9 where it is described as 'one pervasive thought pattern' in the New Testament… this is at the point of the concrete social meaning of the cross in its relation to enmity and power. Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus - and only thus - are we bound by New Testament thought to "be like Jesus"'.

[31] Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*, p. 207.

[32] A more persuasive description of *stauros* in its historical and political setting is made by Hengel, *Crucifixion : In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 88-90 who notes particular themes of solidarity, kenosis and folly in the New Testament portrayal of Jesus' crucifixion.

[33] Yoder, *The Original Revolution : Essays on Christian Pacifism*, p. 179 note 7 where the discipleship practice of non-retaliation is grounded in the Cross by arguing that Jesus' disciples are to 'foster reconciliation at your own expense'.

[34] Cooper, "Incorporated Servanthood: A "Pragmatic-Critical" Analysis of the Theocentric Commitment Evoked by Matthew's Gospel" (Ph.D, University of Western Sydney, 2010) p. 37. In Broughton, "Restorative Justice: Saul's Encounter with the Risen Jesus," 2, no. 1 (2009): 1-15 I demonstrate that the naming and forgiving of Saul's wrongdoing is the pivotal scene in Saul's encounter with the risen Jesus which functions as a conversion and calling-commissioning (Acts 9:4).

[35] Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke* (London: SPCK, 1984). p. 333 where Yoder's departure from Schweizer on this crucial point of interpretation stands in contrast to Yoder's general agreement with, and dependence on, Schweizer's reading of Luke.

[36] Luke 24:46–49; Acts 2:38; 10:38; 13:38; 26:16–18.

[37] In my opinion a more convincing account of the role of forgiveness in Luke's narrative of Jesus' death is provided by Australian New Testament scholar Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 69-71.

[38] Ford, *My Enemy Is My Guest : Jesus and Violence in Luke* (Mayknoll: Orbis, 1984), pp. 108-35 includes a total of eighteen pericopes in Luke's account of Jesus 'passion and death' including the Triumphal Entry (19:28-40), words about the fate of Jerusalem (19:41-43), the Cleansing of the Temple (19:45-46), Jesus' Teaching in the Temple and the Role of the Pharisees (19:47-48), the Last Supper and the Dispute about Greatness (22:24-30), the Two Swords (22:35-38) Gethsemane (22:39-46 including the 'Sweat of Blood' verses 43-44), Jesus Arrest (22:47-53), Peter's Denial (22:54-62), the Mockery of Jesus (22:63-65), Jesus before the Sanhedrin and Pilate (22:66-23:5), Jesus before Herod (23:6-16), the Death Sentence (23:17-25), the Way to Golgotha (23:26-31) Jesus Forgives His Enemies (23:34), Jesus forgives the Criminal (23:39-43), and the Final Declaration of Jesus' Innocence (23:47).

[39] Following a continuing debate over 'divine determinism' in Lucan theology – famously articulated by Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles a Commentary* (Oxford,: Blackwell, 1971), p. 362 who supposed 'a peculiarity of Lucan theology which can scarcely be claimed as a point in its favour; in endeavouring to make the hand of God visible in the history of the church, Luke virtually excludes all human decision'.

[40] c.f. Hengel, *Crucifixion : In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, p. 89 'in the death of Jesus of Nazareth God identified himself with the extreme of human wretchedness, which Jesus endured as a representative of us all'. The theological implications of God's identification have been developed by Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Life* (trans. Cayzer; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), p. 272 who argues from the Cross that 'a society must be assessed not primarily according to its successes and achievements, but according to its treatment of those persons who contribute nothing to the society's political and economic life, such as children, the elderly, the infirm – and criminals'.

[41] Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. ix Hauerwas claims that 'Yoder forces us to change our questions'.

[42] Gk. *ekmykterizœ* much stronger 'ridiculed' – used of the Pharisees as 'lovers of money' 16:14.

[43] Note the use of the present, active, participle.

[44] Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke*, p. 339 notes that 'in Luke all three words from the cross show Jesus' love for humankind and his Father in heaven'.

[45] This is relevant for – but not yet decisive for – the scholarly debate over Lucan atonement theology. See further Peterson. "The Atoning Work of Jesus," in *The Acts of the Apostles*; *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), p. 76 who stands in the tradition of his Australian colleague Leon Morris in finding 'the crucifixion scene suggests the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 as a whole, with the penitent thief acknowledging the injustice of the sentence against Jesus and asking to be remembered when he comes into his Kingdom (23:32-43). The scriptural necessity of Messiah's death and resurrection is then reaffirmed in Luke 24:26, 44-46, and made the basis for the challenge to preach 'repentance for the forgiveness of sins' in Jesus' name 'to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem' (24:47). Salvation is clearly linked to the shedding of Christ's blood and his subsequent resurrection at the end of Luke's first volume.' This compares with Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 70 who cites evidence that, 'though his narrative spans the period from Jesus' birth to Paul's imprisonment, Luke devotes only three partial verses, some nineteen of his almost thirty-eight thousand words, to the atoning significance of Jesus' death'.

[46] Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 828 where "'beating their breasts" suggests sorrow or mourning, with the result that Luke has framed the scene of execution with acts of grief (Jerusalem's daughters - v 27; the gathered crowds - v 48). Linguistic parallels invite further comparison between the humble, justified tax collector (18 :9-14) and these crowds (23:48).'

[47] Bock, *Luke 9:51 – 24.53* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), pp. 1852, 60 'despite Luke's simplicity, he has a more complex portrait of the witnesses. He presents a fuller range of responses to the cross…Luke portrays Jesus' death as a public event that impressed a variety of people in a variety of ways'.

Yoder the Sinner

By Nathan Hobby

Our heroes let us down – even our theological heroes. Of course Yoder was a sinner. *Everyone's* a sinner. But more than most of us, Yoder's sin had public consequences. With the publication this year of Stanley Hauerwas's memoir, *Hannah's Child,* we finally have in print an account that gets specific about what Yoder did (without feeding anyone's appetite for salacious detail). Hauerwas says that, over several decades, Yoder abused his position of power to initiate inappropriate physical contact with a number of women. It stopped short of sexual intercourse, and – most disturbingly for me – was justified to Yoder himself and the women with some convoluted theological reasoning. (p.243ff)

Yoder's colleague Ted Grimsrud writes:

> Like many others, I was shocked and struggled to make sense of it all. It was and remains difficult to hold together the profundity of Yoder's peace theology with the allegations of pain and trauma inflicted by his actions toward numerous women.

For four years from 1992-1996 he submitted to a discipline process which included therapy, an accountability group and apologies to the women he wronged (Religious News Service, 1992). During that time, he was barred from various activities in his church. In this discipline process, the church was being true to Anabaptist teaching and Yoder's own writings about the 'Rule of Christ' from Matthew 18:15-18 - a believer caught in sin who repents should be disciplined by his brothers and sisters before being restored to full fellowship. The Mennonite church took the discipline process seriously and restored Yoder to fellowship a year before his death.

What are we to do about it? Should we place an asterix next to everything he said? Forgive him and not mention it any more? Forgive him and mention it occasionally?

When we know that all of us fall short of God's will, why are we singling out Yoder's behaviour? Because it was sexual? Because it went on so long and involved a number of women? Because of his position?

It's hard to know how we might even attempt to 'downgrade' our estimation of his work if we felt it necessary. Surely sinfulness doesn't exactly change the strength of Yoder's arguments or the depth of his insight? It *could* lead us to conclude that there is too much of a contradiction between what he wrote and what he practiced for us to take his words seriously. But that seems too strong a reaction; he was a scholar, always pointing to Jesus as our example, not to himself.

The matter is made more complex by the abuse of his public position involved in the misconduct and his role as a teacher and writer on Christian ethics. Is there a sense in which the wider body of Christ is to forgive him and restore him to full 'fellowship'? (But surely for us who weren't in his local congregation, 'fellowship' is really only a metaphor?) Does forgiveness involve a kind of forgetting?

I haven't answered all my questions; I can only commend Ted Grimsrud's conclusion:

> Ultimately, though, I believe that Yoder's positive contribution to my life, the life of the Mennonite church and the life of the broader Christian church remains. His witness was compromised by his transgressions. However, we are reminded by the Apostle Paul that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Many of our great heroes have had feet of clay.

References

Ted Grimsrud, "John Yoder: A Faithful Teacher in the Church", *Peace Theology*. Accessed online 20/12/2010: http://peacetheology.net/short-articles/john-howard-yoder-a-faithful-teacher-in-the-church/

Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 2010).

Religious News Service "Mennonite Theologian Disciplined" *Chicago Tribune*, 28 August 1992. Accessed online 20/12/2010: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-08-28/news/9203180387_1_john-howard-yoder-sexual-misconduct-mennonite-church .

Tracking the influence of John Howard Yoder

A Bibliographical Survey

By Doug Hynd

Introduction

By the testimony of all who knew him, John Howard Yoder never set out to be important, nor was he greatly concerned about his influence and impact. Yet he has had a profound influence on Christian theology over the past half century, an influence that shows no sign of quickly fading but is rather rippling out, taking unexpected shapes and appearing in unanticipated contexts. Yoder tried to get us to change the questions we have traditionally asked as we did theology. To fully receive what he gave us may take a long time.

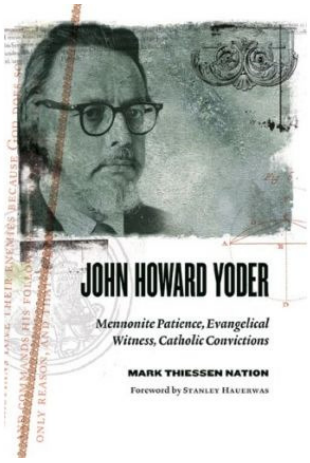
The response to his work so far suggests that his impact will extend well beyond the Mennonite community, and the broader Anabaptist tradition. Indeed his influence is even extending to people who do not identify themselves with the Christian tradition.

The following annotated bibliography is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of his influence. It is simply a quick impressionistic report for those who might be interested in his work and getting some sense of how it is being taken up by other theologians. It is restricted to books and collections of essays published after his death in 1997 up until July 2010.

I have therefore made no attempt in this survey to track his impact on and through the work of Stanley Hauerwas, for example, though you can catch a glimpse of that influence here and there in the books listed. The impact of his work on the theological agenda of James McLendon Jr is also absent from this exercise. The influence of Yoder has been powerfully mediated through these two theologians, but to map that would require another substantial article.

Surveys of Yoder and his work

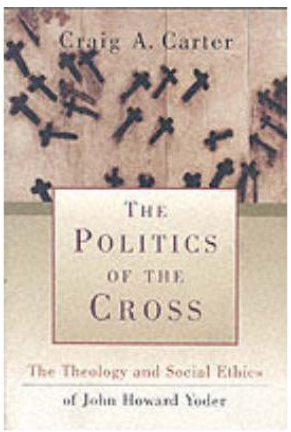
John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions by Mark Thiessen Nation



(Eerdmans, 2006)

Mark Thiessen Nation provides an account of how Yoder's life and writing demonstrated a patient ecumenical vocation that sought to engage other Christian traditions out of a deep connection to his own Anabaptist roots. The author engages with, and unpacks the teachings, involvements, convictions and implications of Yoder's theological project and life through the angles of Mennonite patience, evangelical witness and catholic convictions. This an accessible read for the non-theologian and is a useful introduction for those who are not familiar with Yoder's writings.

The Politics of the Cross: Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder by Craig C Carter (Brazos Press, 2001)

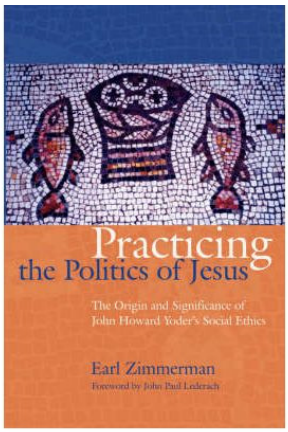


Carter's work falls into four parts. He commences with an account of the historical and theological context of Yoder's thought with its twin roots in the debates over the recovery of the Anabaptist vision in the mid-twentieth century and the theology of Karl Barth. Part II of the study provides an account the importance of Christology for Yoder's social ethics. The discussion in these chapters deals with issues such as the authority of

Scripture and the relationship between Yoder's theological commitments and the affirmations of the creeds. Parts III and IV of this study provide a significant discussion of the connection between social ethics, the character of the church and its relationship to the world.

This work provides a particularly good starting point for evangelicals who are looking for a substantial theological account of discipleship that is grounded in the gospels and provides an account of the church which takes seriously its public and political character.

Practicing the Politics of Jesus: The Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics by Earl Zimmerman (Cascadia Press, 2007)



Zimmerman explores Yoder's thought by means of an interdisciplinary conversation between biblical studies, history, theology, ethics and the social sciences and gives an account of what it means to practice the politics of Jesus in our contemporary world. Zimmerman provides us with an appreciative inquiry into the development of Yoder's thought. It differs from Carter's work in that it relates Yoder's work and life via a chronological approach rather than trying to systematically organise his work by theological themes.

Festschrifts and memorial collections of essays.

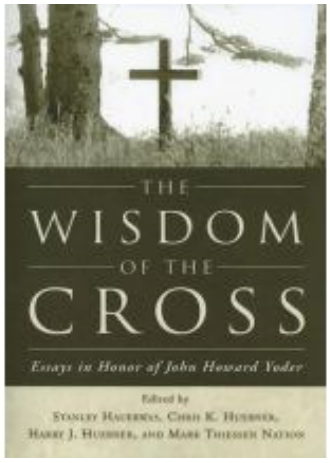
Essays & Tributes John Howard Yoder 1927-1997 Conrad Grebel Review, volume 16, No 2, Spring 1998

This issue of the *Conrad Grebel Review* contains six essays that vary from the scholarly to the personal in terms of their engagement with Yoder's theology, as well as including a number of the tributes from colleagues and his family delivered at a memorial service.

A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics and Peacemaking edited by Ben C Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz (Cascadia Press, 2004)

The chapters in this book derive from papers delivered at the "Assessing the Theological Legacy of John Howard Yoder" Conference at the University of Notre Dame in March 2002. The essays cover a similar range of themes though slightly differently organised to those in the following *festschrift*. In addition there are two essays explicitly exploring the relationship between the work of Yoder and that of Stanley Hauerwas.

The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder edited by Stanley Hauerwas, Chris K Huebner, Harry J Huebner & Mark Thiessen Nation (Eerdmans, 1999)



This is a substantial collection of essays that fits into the typical pattern of a *festschrift* with former students and colleagues contributing on topics that respond to key themes in Yoder's work. One chapter is unusual in that it takes the form of a discussion between Stanley Hauerwas and Chris Huebner on the topic "History, Theory and Anabaptism: A Conversation on Theology after John Howard Yoder".

The essays are grouped under a series of topics which relate to the main themes of Yoder's work, nonviolence, the politics of Jesus, alternatives to methodologism, the otherness of the church and Christianity and Judaism.

Comparative exercises in political theology with Yoder as one of the interlocutors

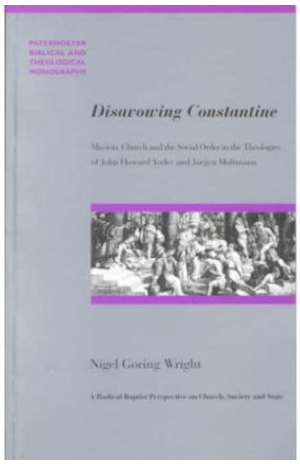
Seek the Peace of the City: Christian Political Criticism as Public, Realist and Transformative by Richard Bourne (Cascade Books, 2009)

Richard Bourne identifies a theological realism in the work of John Howard Yoder which bases social and political criticism in the purposes of a non-violent, patient and reconciling God. Bourne then relates this argument to the work of a number of other contemporary theologians including Stanley Hauerwas, John Milbank, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bourne then furnishes an account of Christian criticism capable of addressing debates in contemporary theology and political theory.

Beyond Suspicion: Post-Christendom Protestant Political theology in John Howard Yoder and Oliver O'Donovan by Paul G. Doerksen (Paternoster Theological Monographs, Paternoster Press, 2009)

Doerksen undertakes a comparative analysis of the work of John Howard Yoder and Oliver O'Donovan to show how, in a post-christendom secular liberal society, these two Protestant theologians have tried in different ways to relate discourse about God to political thought and social order.

Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church and the Social Order in the Theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann by Nigel Goring Wright (Paternoster Theological Monographs, Wipf & Stock, 2006)



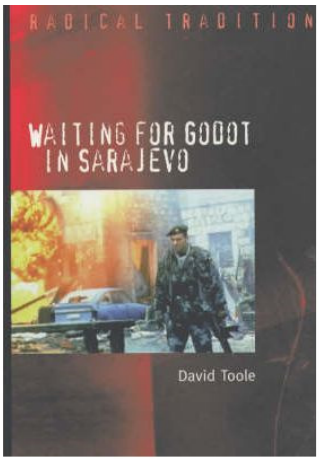
Wright draws upon the work of Yoder and Moltmann in a comparative analysis to develop a constructive understanding of the relationship of the church and the state. The author restates the main themes of the Believers church tradition and explores its connections and differences with the Reformed tradition through engaging with the work of Moltmann, and Yoder, and draws out the implications of their work for Christian participation in the civil order.

4. Working with and beyond Yoder

An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire by Michael Northcott (I.B.Taurus, 2004)

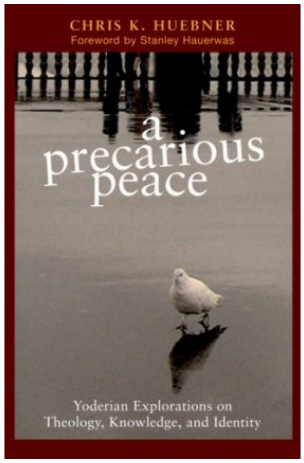
Michael Northcott provides a stunningly vigorous exploration of the apocalyptic vision that has underpinned American foreign policy in recent years. He contrasts it with the critique of empire and the apocalyptic vision of the early church, drawing on the work of Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder. The final chapter, "The Warrior Ethos and the Politics of Jesus,' is especially indebted to Yoder.

Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy and Apolcalypse by David Toole (SCM Press, 2001)



David Toole undertakes a profound and complex philosophical, theological and literary exploration of living with dignity in a world of suffering, particularly as it manifested itself in the twentieth century. He particularly engages with Nietzsche, Foucault and Yoder in developing his argument, an argument that ends with a focus on Yoder in the final chapters: "Worthy are the Slaughtered: Toward a Metaphysics of Apocalypse and an Apocalyptic Politics" and "Revolutionary Subordination: The Apocalyptic Politics of Jesus and the Church".

A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge and Identity by Chris K Huebner (Herald Press, 2006)



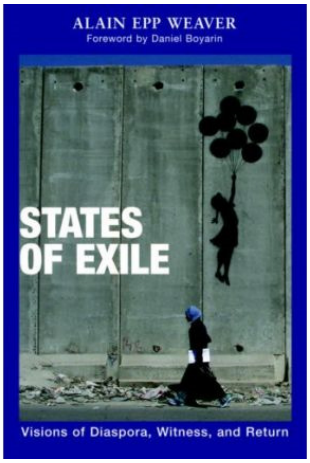
This book is a collection of essays that puts into question much of the attempt of the theologian to arrive at certainty. The essays engage in the exploration of insights from Yoder that point to the need to live out of control in doing theology. Conversation partners with Yoderian themes that include the precariousness of peace include Rowan Williams, John Milbank, Karl Barth, two Mennonite grandmothers and Canadian cinematographers.

Huebner is thinking here about theology and the task of theology with rather than about John Howard Yoder.

States of Exile: Visions of Diaspora, Witness and Return by Alain Epp Weaver (Herald Press, 2008)

Weaver here picks up Yoderian themes of exile and diaspora as integral dimensions of the church's witness to and for the shalom of the city. This collection of essays was inspired by over a decade of living and

working among Palestinian refugees. Beyond engaging with Yoder, Weaver brings his thinking into conversation with Edward Said, Karl Barth and Daniel Boyarin.



Power and Practices: Engaging the Work of John Howard Yoder edited by Jeremy M Bergen and Anthony G Siegrist (Herald Press, 2009)

This collection of essays represents the first fruits of a younger generation of scholars engaging with Yoder's work around questions of power and its implications for social practices including policing, non-violence, sexism, government, political critique and the issue of "inheriting" a tradition.

*The New Yode*r edited by Peter Dula and Chris K. Huebner (Cascade Books, Wipf & Stock, 2010)

This volume contains a collection of essays that demonstrate the extent to which Yoder is now being read in a much wider context than that of his initial critique of mainstream Christian social ethics. Scholars engaging with post-structuralism, neo-Nietzschian thinkers and post-colonialism have all begun to find Yoder a helpful foil for their work and are represented in this diverse and interesting collection.

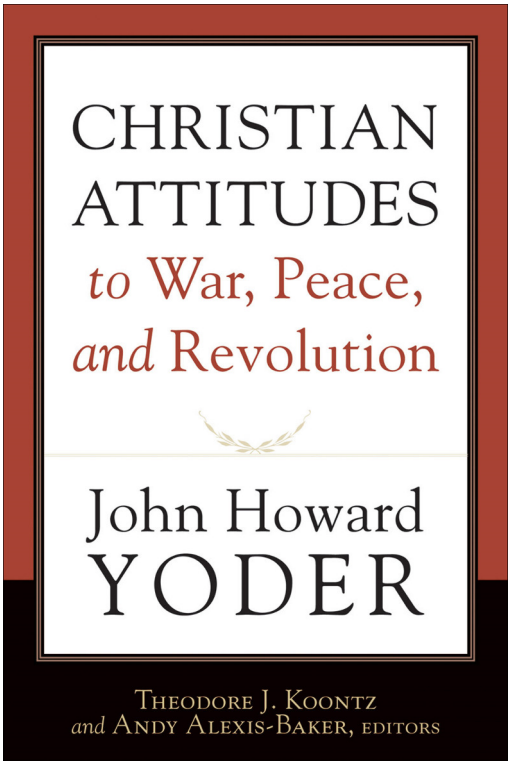
Scholars outside of Christianity, Romand Coles thinking about the practice of radical democracy and Daniel Boyarin as a Jewish scholar thinking about Judaism and the early church are represented here with powerful essays that find themselves somewhat to their surprise engaging with Yoder.

Conclusion

There is something particularly fascinating about the fact that a thinker once critiqued for his "sectarianism" should be attracting such "ecumenical" interest across disciplinary and confessional boundaries. Also of interest is the extent to which Yoder is having an impact on political theologians who are consequently find themselves while remaining political theologians having to take seriously issues of ecclesiology.

On reflection this should not be surprising. Yoder wrote to place his own tradition of church against the presumptions of the Constantinian settlement and its contemporary apologists. As that settlement continues to decay and the possibility of an alternative church and an alternative politics comes into view it is the time for his perspective and critique to be acknowledged and received by the wider church. For those outside the church the voice of a Christian theologian who gives an account of a politics beyond a necessary complicity with violence is proving interesting and attractive.

Book Reviews



Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution

John Howard Yoder; Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker, editors. Brazos Press, 2009.

Reviewed by Nathan Hobby.

Like *Preface to Theology* (2003), this book is the material for a unit Yoder taught, edited posthumously. It was published in rough form as a textbook for students taking his unit. The students who had access to this original publication for decades before the rest of us were very fortunate. This book is longer than anything else ever published by Yoder and is a significant work. It is a historical survey, tracing in Yoder's refreshing and provoking way the attitudes of Christians toward war, peace and revolution through the centuries.

For me, the book is a lesson in the importance of history, a testament to the importance of knowing the history of a subject before you can claim to understand the subject at all. In their preface, the editors' sum up the book's power:

> In stating other perspectives in their strongest form, a surprising history unfolds. For Yoder, the history of Christian attitudes toward war and peace is clearly not a mainstream account that sees the church faithfully responding to the gospel by outgrowing its early pacifism, maturing and coming to accept responsibility, including the need to wage war. But neither is it a story of simple decline from the New Testament to the Anabaptists, as some within Yoder's Mennonite tradition have told it. The most striking aspects of this story are the resilience through the centuries of the gospel of peace, and the abiding power of Jesus's hold on people that invites them to imitate him in seeking peace and shunning violence. Again, and again, Yoder demonstrates, people throughout history have seen Jesus, and been drawn into the power of the cross. (p.8)

One striking example, which I'll summarise at length as an example of Yoder's method, is his re-reading of the Middle Ages in chapter 9, "The Peace Dimension of Medieval Moral Concern". Yoder describes various ways in which violence and war were restrained in the Middle Ages (476-1453), and the church embodied a partial peace witness. These include:

- Holy times and places - fighting was forbidden in certain places (cemeteries) and at certain times (Good Friday, after sunset)
- Penitents – when a person confessed to a major offence, they might commit several months of their life around being a penitent, perhaps going on a pilgrimage as a penitent. A penitent was to be nonviolent and unarmed. 'In the life of medieval Europe, therefore, people renouncing violence because they were Christian were a visible minority.' (p.119)
- Priests admonished princes when they went too far. There was an element of accountability.

Yoder argues that the shifts involved in the Reformation actually increased the church's support of war:

> Protestants have been taught to think of the Reformation of the sixteenth century as undoing the mistakes of the Middle Ages – papacy, sacraments, justification by works, and other things. But on the morality of war, our model for interpreting the Reformation has to be turned around. The Protestant Reformation goes further in the direction of making war acceptable. (115)

Yoder identifies a number of ways in which this happened:

- The Reformation dismantled confession and pen-

ance, both of which had restrained bloodshed.

- The Reformation desacralized the world – everything was equally holy, or equally unholy; there were no holy places or holy times to avoid bloodshed.
- Instead of the priest admonishing the prince, the chaplain emerges: 'In the Reformation, the Protestant chaplain increasingly gives a religious mandate to what people do, whether it is celebrating marriages or justifying causes and crusades… The preachers are the people to make the case for the next war.' (p.119)
- The Reformation created nationalism - wars in the Middle Ages occurred within the Roman Catholic Church. Both parties 'were at home in the same world, had the same moral heritage, and used the same yardsticks. They had a sense of being part of a wider civilization… The Reformation broke up the unity of the church and of the empire. It set aside the notion that enemy nations and adversary institutions have a claim on us. The beginning of nationalism in the modern sense – the notion that a nation constitutes a moral unit with no accountability to a wider community or culture – is a product of the Protestant Reformation.' (p. 120-121)

The obvious objection is the Crusades of the Middle Ages. Yoder spends a couple of pages dealing with them, but not with the same questions we have in mind, and so his explanation is not satisfactory. He looks at how the Crusades were justified by priests (and the limits – not always followed – which they placed on them) and the sense in which the Crusades were a synthesis of the holy war and the just war. He seems unaware of the damage the existence of the Crusades do to his case.

Another chapter of particular interest to me was "Pacifism in the Nineteenth Century". The nineteenth century seems to have been so formative for the current state of the evangelical church, seeing the rise of Churches of Christ, the Brethren, Wesleyanism and just afterwards, the Pentecostal movement. Within each of these restoration and renewal movements was a seed of pacifism – now lost. Yoder makes this astute comment about Pentecostalism:

> The Pacifism and racial integration of the movement as a whole were not deeply rooted, because Pentecostals did not believe in being deeply rooted. They thought history, theology and church structures did not matter, so they had no historical consciousness from which to sense a radical ethical position in the world. (262)

Interestingly, in Yoder's account, Pentecostalism abandoned its original pacifism firstly in order to evangelise troops in World War One. He writes, 'By the time of World War II, they created seminaries, because military chaplaincy required a seminary degree. They did not believe in seminary for their churches, but they gave chaplains a seminary degree in order to get them into the army.' (263)

At the end of this chapter, Yoder asks a question deeply relevant to the AAANZ today:

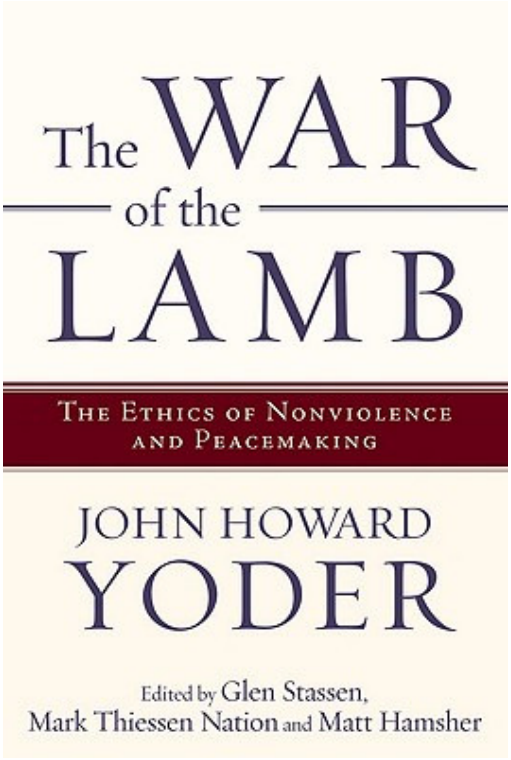
> Should we concentrate on trying to talk with institutional churches with long-established theological positions? If we are interested in propagating a witness against violence, should we instead look to the non-traditional renewal frontier, where people do not have as many good reasons for not listening, but also will be not as profound in their support or as thorough in their appropriation if they do hear? (270)

The 'non-traditional renewal frontier' which comes to mind for me is the house church and emerging church movements, and it seems to me that he has anticipated their response well.

There is just so much history I didn't know in this book. The next chapter, "Liberal Protestant Pacifism", paints a fascinating picture of the brief flourishing of pacifism amongst the liberal Protestant mainstream in the 1920s, which came fully unstuck with World War Two. He mentions in passing (p.277) the pacifism of three evangelical/fundamentalist heroes – Jonathan Blanchard (founder of Wheaton College), Dwight L. Moody and William Jennings Bryan (creationist villain of the Scopes Monkey trial). He says that their successors have 'falsified' the record because of 'their tactical alliance with the heirs of creedal orthodoxy and social conservatism'.

The book has its origins in the 1960s and was last revised by Yoder in the 1980s. The change in context since then is apparent; it is a pity we don't have Yoder's thoughts on the 'War on Terror', the acceleration of post-Christendom and the effect of church growth and the megachurch on Christian attitudes to war and peace. He devotes a lot of space to responding to his great sparring partner, Reinhold Niebuhr, only to write in an obviously late addition, 'By the early 1980s, Reinhold Niebuhr is less known or read, while the analysis of which he was the classical spokesman is more and more taken for granted.' (p.308) His comment is more true now, which makes it feel tiresome at times to read so much material in response to Niebuhr.

Yoder is never easy to read, and at 472 pages this book is mountainous. (We owe our thanks to the editors, who judiciously trimmed it from a much greater length, as well as tidying up the manuscript extensively so that it is less repetitious and makes more sense.) It helps to remember that it is the substance of a semester-long unit. But who, then, is going to read this book? How many of us are willing to commit ourselves to the equivalent of a semester-long unit (albeit without the exam or essays or extra readings) on our own? Probably not many of us. If it seems too daunting, perhaps you should buy it and read four or five chapters. Save the rest for another time.



The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking. By John Howard Yoder. Edited by Glen Stassen, Mark Thiessen Nation, and Matt Hamsher. Brazos Press, 2009. 230pp

Reviewed by Gary Baker

This book is about Christian peace theology, with a pacifism modeled on Jesus. As Yoder wrote earlier in *The Politics of Jesus*, 'The cross of Christ is the model of Christian social efficacy, the power of God for those who believe' (p.242). This pacifism 'goes with the grain of the universe' (p.62, p.179).

It is John Howard Yoder's 'final' book in that he had planned the book before his sudden death in 1997 (the other posthumous publications were unplanned). It is a collection of essays and lectures on the ethics of nonviolence and peacemaking from almost a thirty year period. Editing colleagues Glen Stassen, Mark Thiessen Nation, and Matt Hamsher completed the compilation. The Introduction "Jesus is no sectarian. John H. Yoder's Christological peacemaking ethic" by Glen Stassen is helpful in identifying important themes, which occur throughout the essays. In addition he provides some comments on Yoder's intent in selecting the materials used.

The presentations were prepared for specific audiences, ranging from scholarly bodies to ecumenical conferences. The book has no single overt argument, but is connected by overlapping themes. The compilation gives the breadth of Yoder's peace theology, not the depth. Fortunately there are extensive cross-references to Yoder's other writings on nonviolence.

The book is divided into three sections: Section I "Nonviolence: The Case for Life and Love" with five essays on the ethics of pacifism (written 1983 to1992), Section II "The Dialogue With Just War: A Case For Mutual Learning" with four essays (written 1992 to 1997), and Section III "Effective Peacemaking Practices: The Case for Proactive Alternatives to Violence" with six essays (written 1969 to 1991). There is a movement in focus from Jesus, to the church, and then to the world.

The first section on "Nonviolence: The case for life and love" has two central essays "A theological critique of violence"(ch.1), and "Jesus: A model of radical political action"(ch.5). The latter was written to mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *The Politics of Jesus*. Lethal violence is evil; violence begets violence. Jesus overcomes evil by suffering, enemy love and renunciation of dominion.

The moral character of God is revealed, and Jesus is validated by resurrection and ascension. Imitation of Jesus in this regard is a social ethic: 'Jesus says that by loving their enemies his disciples will be like their heavenly father. This is said of no other ethical issue.' (p.79)

A chosen people, the church, are invited to be part of the kingdom. The church needs to reach out to the world. However, the world can contaminate church, and false doctrines arise to stop Jesus' message of radical political action. Yoder writes of the Constantinian mistake, which has compromised the church. He examines and refutes the notions by Troeltsch and the Niebuhrs that the non-retaliatory love made incarnate in Jesus is publically irrelevant. Radical renewal can overcome these issues, as seen in the Free Church. A church of believers can follow the way of Jesus in nonviolent suffering love and reach into the world.

In "The Political Meaning of Hope" (ch. 3), Yoder explores the 'cosmological conversions' of Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., who each in their own way discovered that suffering love is the right form of political action. 'Suffering love is not right because it "works" in any calculable short-run way (although it often does). It is right because it goes with the grain of the universe, and that is why in the long run nothing else will work.' (p.62)

In the second section, "The Dialogue With Just War: A Case For Mutual Learning", Yoder is concerned

with the inadequacy and failure of the just war tradition. However, dialogue and engagement is very important. He states, 'I don't dialogue with the just war tradition because I think it is credible, but because it is the language that people, who I believe bear the image of God, abuse to authorize themselves to destroy other bearers of the image.' (p.116) 'My use of their language, taking its integrity more seriously than they do, is a form of the second-mile response that Jesus taught and lived.' (p.110)

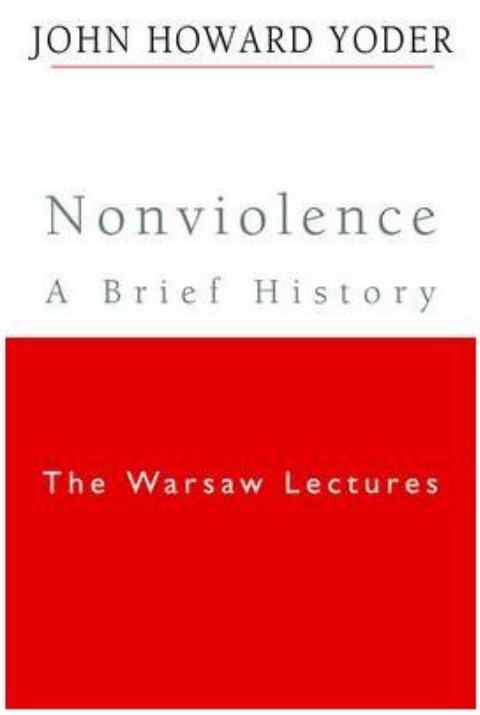
In "Just War and Nonviolence: Disjunction, Dialogue or Complementarity?" (ch.6), Yoder argues that nonviolence can help to make just war thought more honest, and just war thinking can help to make nonviolence more disciplined.

In the third section, "Effective Peacemaking Practices: The Case for Proactive Alternatives to Violence", there is a reaching out into the world with active nonviolent strategies. It includes the 'just peacemaking' practices of nonviolent direct action, conflict resolution, democracy and justice, support for the United Nations, international cooperation, and participation in alternative communities. The emphasis is on an active witness of kingdom living, with an emphasis on dialogue (see section 2), patience, noncoercive, and suffering approach.

Yoder has not written a preface, or introduction to bring all together. But he has provided a title "The War of the Lamb", which is also the title of chapter 12 in *The Politics of Jesus*. The Lamb is the figure in the book of Revelation who is in charge of the history of salvation. The Lamb beside the throne in Revelation 5 is the same as the Son at the Father's right hand. The term is from the early Quakers, describing the concept of our participation in the character of God's struggle with a rebellious world and evil through following Jesus Christ's example of suffering love. If in our suffering we do not lose faith, this is the beginning of God's victory. Perhaps Yoder's last call is for us to engage and join the war of the lamb!

Our lamb has conquered: him let us follow

VICIT AGNUS NOSTER EUM SEQUAMUR



Nonviolence: A Brief History - The Warsaw Lectures by John Howard Yoder; edited by Paul Martens, Matthew Porter and Myles Werntz. Baylor University Press, 2010.

Reviewed by Doug Hynd

John Howard Yoder's *Nonviolence: A Brief History*, is yet another in what is proving to be an extended series of posthumously published books. The text is comprised of lectures that he gave in Warsaw Poland in 1983. To remind you of the historical context, at that time the Solidarity Movement had became a powerful nonviolent force trying to affect change in Communist Poland. Pope John Paul II was to visit Poland just a month after the lectures were delivered.

While the material contains little that is original, it is good to have the lectures as they pull together in a simple, accessible way a coherent overview of Yoder's account of the history and practice of nonviolence and its theological underpinnings. Yoder also displays his ecumenical awareness in three chapters on Catholic peace theology.

Hopefully the lectures might eventually be published in paperback as the hardback version is expensive for a book of 150 pages—although online store Book Depository has it for around $32 at the time of going to press. There is a good review that explores some of the issues in depth by Andy Alexis-Baker on the Jesus Radicals website (www.jesusradicals.org).

Member Profile

Neil and Margaret Holm

1. What interests you most about Anabaptism?

Margaret: Its focus on the need to balance words and action – the daily challenge to live the Sermon on the Mount.

Neil: Its focus on Christ in the context of peace, community, mutual accountability, and the poor.

2. Favourite/least favourite part of the Bible?

Margaret: "Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another – showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us."
-2 Timothy 3:16-17, The Message

I look forward to eternity to discover the benefit of those parts that puzzle, cure insomnia, or make me cringe because of the horrific violence described.

Neil: Colossians 1 where Paul prays that "you may be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." (NRSV)

3. Church involvement present and/or past?

Margaret: Baptist neighbours introduced me to Jesus through Sunday School in their shed. I moved through Sunday School and youth group at the local Baptist Church to accept Christ at fourteen, experience the joy of believer's baptism and then become a fully fledged member of the church at that tender age. In turn, I taught Sunday School and became a youth group leader. It wasn't until much later that I fully appreciated the wonderful mentoring and strong foundational teaching I received throughout that time.

My time of teaching/living in the New England area of NSW and later in the Northern Territory opened up opportunities for worship with other denomina-

tions and ecumenical worship – wonderfully enriching.

We are both actively involved in a dispersed ecumenical community in Australia, the Wellspring Community. With all our moving since 1999 – from Qld to the NT to NSW – the Wellspring Community has remained a constant connection with other Christians who deeply desire to follow Christ in a balanced, active way. A very thin space exists between AAANZ and the Wellspring Community (www.wellspringcommunity.org.au) but the age range of members of AAANZ is much greater!

Neil: I went to an Anglican Sunday School, was confirmed, drifted away in my teenage years, explored eastern religions in my early adulthood, met Margaret in my early twenties, started attending her Baptist church, made a commitment to Christ. We married and went to teach primary school in the Northern Territory in association with the Baptist Church. Later became involved in a small community church which brought Anglicans, Uniting Church, Salvation Army, and Pentecostals together in great harmony, love, and mutual benefit – a transformative experience that surpassed previous and subsequent church experiences.

4. How do we spend our time?

Margaret: We moved to Brisbane on 27th October. I no longer seek paid employment and look forward to settling into our new neighbourhood and exploring possibilities of involvement in the local school as a volunteer tutor. I volunteered in Sydney with a group who provided support for people moving back into society after time in gaol. I remain passionate about seeking justice and support for those caught up in our justice system so will explore volunteer possibilities in this area as well.

Neil: My paid employment is as Director of Coursework with Sydney College of Divinity (a network of theological colleges drawn from Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Salvation Army, Churches of Christ, Brethren, Korean (Presbyterian), and Nazarene churches). I do some academic writing on chaplaincy, theological education, and applying the thinking of Bonhoeffer and Rowan Williams in education.

We are both looking forward to spending special time with our children, grandchildren and friends in Brisbane. Working/playing in our garden is already bringing us joy. We also enjoy theatre (just saw *My Name is Rachel Corrie* - the young woman killed by a bulldozer in Palestine as she tried to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home). We enjoy films, especially Australian films (just saw Summer Coda). We read. We walk. Margaret quilts. Neil plays tennis and chats to people via Facebook.

5. A book or writer who has inspired you?

Margaret: I've just discovered Kathleen Norris via *The Noonday Demon*. I now have her other books and look forward to further exploration of her ideas.

Neil: Robert Bank's work in general. His *Paul's Idea of Community* has been particularly influential in a formative way. It gave me tools for thinking about the process of schooling from a Christian perspective.

6. Politics?

We write letters to politicians of all persuasions! We've been encouraged that responses we've received recently have actually addressed the issues raised. We appreciate GetUp and respond to those issues we feel we can support. We also appreciate *The Drum* on ABC 24 and *Q&A* because listening to the beliefs/ thoughts of others helps us articulate our own.

7. Anabaptists of interest?

Neil: Alan and Eleanor Kreider. Alan's small paper on "Salty Discipleship" (http://bit.ly/buoKDE) and his work on the origins of Christendom were very helpful. Eleanor's passion for the Anabaptist prayer book encouraged my exploration of more liturgical prayer.

8. **A film you've liked?**

As it is in Heaven stands out. A great exploration of community, even ekklesia.

Contributor Profiles

Gary Baker works as a doctor and lives in Armidale, NSW.

Geoff Broughton is currently working on a PhD in theology at Charles Sturt University.

Michael Buttrey lives in the USA and blogs at http://beyondthesecularcanopy.wordpress.com

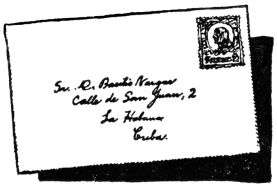
Nathan Hobby has written simplifications of two of Yoder's books, *Body Politics* and *Politics of Jesus*, which you can find at http://perthanabaptists.wordpress.com.

Neil and Margaret Holm are AAANZ members now living in Brisbane.

Mark Hurst is both a AAANZ staffworker and a pastor at Avalon Memorial Baptist Church.

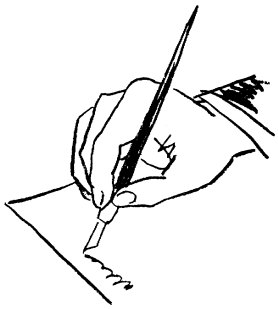
Doug Hynd lives in Canberra and writes the blog http://doug-subversivevoices.blogspot.com.

How to...SUBSCRIBE



Subscription to *On The Road* is free; email the editor, nathanhobby@gmail.com to be added to the list. You will receive the quarterly *On The Road* by email as a pdf attachment and occasional requests for articles or feedback.

How to...CONTRIBUTE



Submissions are welcome. To contribute, please send your proposal or article to the editor, Nathan Hobby, nathanhobby@gmail.com. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word (any version) or Rich Text Format. Photos or illustrations are helpful.

For referencing please use Harvard (in-text) style, with author, date and page number in brackets, followed by a bibliography at the end. **Please avoid endnotes or footnotes as** Microsoft Publisher can't easily handle them.

The theme of the next issue, #48 is 'Living on the Edge of Empire'. I hope to publish articles from the conference, as well as your reflections on the theme—even if you aren't there!

The deadline is 28 February 2010. Non-themed submissions are welcome.

How to... JOIN

If you identify with the Anabaptist impulse and want to join the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand, visit www.anabaptist.asn.au.

Membership is open to individuals and groups who desire to make Jesus, community and reconciliation the centre of their faith, life and work.

Membership enables you to be connected to others in the network and join tele-chats with guest speakers from your own phone. You will also receive the quarterly prayer and contact calendar.

There is no membership fee, but we encourage you to give money to the association and the work of our staffworkers, Mark and Mary Hurst.