

Chapter abstracts LTPOJ

Liberating the Politics of Jesus: Renewing Peace Theology through the Wisdom of Women

Written for a new generation that is aware that gender justice and peace theology are inseparable, this book contends for the authority of women as theologians and for women's perspectives on core issues such as atonement, peacemaking, trauma, suffering, and discipleship. This renewed vision of Anabaptist peace theology has the potential to transform the work of theology and ministry in all Christian traditions.

Part I: Retrieval, Remembering, and Re-envisioning

Chapter 1: The Retrieval of a Liberating Christology

Bedford, Nancy

Nancy Bedford begins by asking, "Do Anabaptist Christologies help or hinder discipleship?" Writing as an Anabaptist Latina feminist systematic theologian working within the tradition of the hermeneutical spiral of deconstruction and retrieval, she argues that Christology must be liberated from normative whiteness, lethal forms of masculinity, and docetic epistemologies. Drawing on depictions of Mary by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, distinctive Anabaptist Christological convictions identified by Thomas Finger, and practices of her own faith community, Bedford seeks to discover what the "politics of Jesus" means concretely for the bodies of those who are not coded as white, or straight, or male. She concludes, in order truly to be liberating in a North American context, the "politics of Jesus" needs to de-center whiteness, re-orient masculinity, and celebrate a holistic understanding of life.

Chapter 2: Jesus and the Stories of Our Lives

Penner, Carol

Carol Penner presents the history and methodology of the Mennonite Central Committee *Women's Concerns Report* (1973–2004) as a distinct expression of peace theology. The *Report* was one of the first places where Anabaptist women actually controlled the agenda and format of theological writing. Through storytelling and feminist/womanist/mujerista analysis, this publication presented the real stories of Anabaptist women, including stories about violence and abuse, inspiring women to imagine new ways to understand Jesus, exercise power, and structure community. The author suggests three important areas for continued development of Anabaptist theology: advocating for women doing theology; inclusion of personal stories; and listening to stories of the marginalized, including the stories the earth is telling us.

Chapter 3: The Politics of Suffering and JustPraxis

Soto Albrecht, Elizabeth

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht presents JustPraxis, a constructive theology of justice-liberation. Her journey as a Latina practical theologian leads her to liberate the politics of Jesus from the predominant Christian teaching of voluntary suffering. Instead, she defines suffering as a political problem, recognizing it as a direct result of human actions and systems of oppression. JustPraxis seeks not only justice for individuals but also entire communities, resisting the

normalization of historical violence. This process of proclaiming liberation is based on truth-telling and breaking silence about suffering and violence, leading to compassion and communal healing.

Part II: Living the Politics of Jesus in Context

Chapter 4: Hospitality as Revolutionary In Subordination in South Africa

Suderman, Karen

Karen Suderman, reflecting on her experience as a missionary, examines the subversive practice of hospitality during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Recognizing the important role that John Howard Yoder's theology played and continues to play in South Africa, this chapter re-evaluates Yoder's depiction of revolutionary subordination by reclaiming a traditionally subordinate role, that of host, as an act of revolutionary *insubordination*, dramatically altering power dynamics and reimagining how people of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds can engage and embrace one another. Thus, the author offers a reinterpretation of the phrase "revolutionary subordination" and uses South Africa as a case study to highlight daily acts of revolution from ordinary radicals.

Chapter 5: Women of Faith Advocating and the Peace Agreement in Colombia

Lozano, Alix

Alix Lozano examines the role of women of faith in a society in crisis, amid armed conflict and both structural and social violence, drawing on her work as a peace activist in Colombia. She describes the role of women in the peace process and implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement as well as theological and religious obstacles to believers' political advocacy. As a model of peacebuilding, she presents the work of the Ecumenical Group of Women Builders of Peace (GemPaz), of which she is a founding member and leader. Engaging in contextual reading of the Bible, facilitated dialogue, and other concrete methods for overcoming divisions and suspicions among Christians of different denominations, their work shows that the liberating policies of Jesus and his praxis go far beyond theoretical concepts. She also discusses ongoing challenges to ecumenical cooperation and transformation.

Chapter 6: Pacifism, Non-Violence, and the Assault on Marginalized Bodies OR Historical Consciousness as Anti-Racism Work in the U.S.A.

Stoltzfus, Regina Shands

Regina Shands Stoltzfus draws upon critical race theory and narrative theology to identify how American racial history is a text that counters and competes with historic peace church theology. This tension is illustrated by the ambiguous history of Mennonite urban missions—white Mennonites sent to Black communities. She argues that a church committed to anti-racism work must go beyond a "racial reconciliation" model that creates the illusion of unity at the expense of particularity. To address the deep systemic roots of racism, peace theology must promote community that builds the capacity to sit together in uncomfortable places, dares to ask difficult questions, insists upon holding one another accountable, and addresses power disparities. This kind of community necessitates creating a historical consciousness of American racial history.

Part III: Salvation, Redemption, and Witness

Chapter 7: Salvation for the Sinned Against

Peachey, Linda Gehman

Linda Gehman Peachey seeks an Anabaptist theology of salvation that takes seriously women's experiences of silencing, oppression, and violation, both in the church and in the world at large. However, she observes that much of current Anabaptist atonement theology commends suffering as the way to salvation. Drawing on interviews with Anabaptist women, writings of Mennonite women over the past thirty years, as well as her own experience, she constructs a theology of salvation, life, and wholeness for those who have been violated and disregarded. The way to salvation is not suffering but rather God's solidarity and presence with us in creative resistance to the powers of evil. The God we meet in Jesus is always reaching out to embrace, empower, liberate, and vindicate those who have been sinned against.

Chapter 8: Never Merely Victims

Dufault-Hunter, Erin

Given the persistence of sexual violence against women, Erin Dufault-Hunter wrestles with how victims can respond to violence without becoming like their victimizers. She argues that any attempt to address sexual violence must hold together two truths: the pernicious effects of sexual trauma and the reality of God's unrelenting redemption. Anabaptist theology offers hope by reminding us that victims of sexual violence are never *merely* victims. Because not even sexual violence overcomes God's redemptive power, victims can come to love enemies, refusing to disregard their humanity, by perceiving them truthfully, as the pitiable creatures they are. This chapter offers a glimpse of how those seemingly damned to victimization can escape the logic of violence, not through powerlessness but through the power of the wounded-yet-risen body of Christ.

Chapter 9: Bearing Witness to Jesus, Resurrected Survivor of Sexual Violence

Scarsella, Hilary Jerome

How ought Christian communities respond to testimonies of sexual violence when a sense of certainty regarding the facts and circumstances is limited? In this chapter, Hilary Jerome Scarsella cultivates alternative ground upon which to build political resistance to sexual violence and solidarity with survivors by considering Jesus' crucifixion. Given that sexual violence was a common aspect of Roman crucifixion, it is likely that Jesus was the victim of sexual assault—though we cannot be certain. The limits of our knowledge require us to restructure our politics such that solidarity with survivors is both possible in the midst of uncertainty and constitutive of our witness. Bearing witness to possibility provides a concrete mode of resistance to sexual violence, enabling political action in solidarity with survivors when certainty regarding the facts of survivors' testimonies is not available.

Part IV: Responding to and Learning from John Howard Yoder's Sexual Violence

Chapter 10: Repairing the Moral Canopy after Institutional Betrayal

Shenk, Sara Wenger

Speaking from her perspective as its former president, Sara Wenger Shenk recounts Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)'s journey of truth-telling in the wake of John Howard Yoder's case, including the key decisions, guiding priorities, hoped for outcomes, and courageous wise collaborators (including most importantly, victims of Yoder's sexual experimentation and violence). The nonviolent politics of Jesus emboldened AMBS to listen to victims of sexual violence, call for transparency and truth-telling, adjudicate wisely when discerning next steps, confess institutional complicity in exacerbating the harm, and apologize. This work of mending the moral canopy of the AMBS community made credible again a theology of peace grounded in its tradition as a peace church, in its stated convictions as a Mennonite seminary, and in Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection.

Chapter 11: Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse

MC USA

This chapter consists of the original text, in its entirety, of the Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse, passed by the Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly at Kansas City, Missouri, July 3, 2015. The Statement identifies the reality of sexual abuse in families, churches, and communities; confesses the church's failures of action and inaction; and voices repentance. "We resolve to tell the truth about sexual abuse; hold abusers accountable; acknowledge the seriousness of their sin; listen with care to those who have been wounded; protect vulnerable persons from injury; work restoratively for justice; and hold out hope that wounds will be healed, forgiveness offered, and relationships established or reestablished in healthy ways." The main Statement calls for specific actions and commitments by congregations and church institutions. Appendices narrate how to view sexual abuse through a biblical lens, cultural lens, and justice lens and provide definitions of terms and a list of resources.

Chapter 12: Adopting the 2015 MC USA Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse

Peachey, Linda Gehman

In 2013, Mennonite Church USA initiated a new process to attend to the ongoing painful legacy of John Howard Yoder's sexual violence, guided by a six-member Discernment Group and resulting in the passage of a Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse in 2015. Linda Gehman Peachey, a member of and writer for this group, outlines the major events and concerns that led to the Statement, as well as subsequent steps toward implementation. She discusses three ongoing challenges facing the church: sexuality and systemic violence, sexuality and hierarchical dualism, and theology and worship practices shaped with sensitivity to and informed by survivors of sexual abuse.

Chapter 13: Lessons from Anabaptist Women's Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Violence OR Extending Moral Repair to the Study of Theology and Religion

Guth, Karen V.

Karen V. Guth considers what scholars and teachers of theology and religion can learn from Anabaptist women's responses to John Howard Yoder's sexual violence. Concerted responses by women modelled moral repair—action that redresses the structural, cultural, and institutional scope of the problem. Key lessons include: the importance of women's experience; the need to connect theory and practice; the imperative of addressing myriad forms of violence; the need to attend to misuses of power; and a reconceptualization of legitimate theological authority. The implications include a consideration of authority and moral harm in the classroom when choosing whether and how to teach Yoder's work as well as how to teach traumatic material while avoiding an unhelpful focus on redemption narratives and closure. The salience of these lessons extends beyond Yoder's case to other legacies implicated in traumatic pasts, both historical and contemporary.

Closing Remarks:

Elizabeth and Darryl