"Defanging the Beast": Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse

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During the mid-1970s, the renowned Christian ethicist and theologian John Howard Yoder embarked on an experiment in human sexuality, devising his own guidelines and selecting his own subjects, whom he called "sisters." Writing in 1979 to his colleague and supervisor, Marlin E. Miller, the president of Goshen Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, Yoder laid out a continuum of activities in which he and a number of women had engaged:

- superficial touch as a natural greeting
- discussion of possible deeper meaning of touch . . . .
- more meaningful . . . . touch; may be a handclasp, a hug, or a brief kiss . . . .
- Same expressions as above but they become an expectation . . . . May be added a closed door, lap-sitting, a less fleeting kiss.
- token partial disrobing
- total disrobing
- specific touching of penis/pubis
- exploration of partial/interrupted arousal/intermission

"Other variables," Yoder continued, "cut across these":

- Whether just once as a threshold experience or repeated;
- whether done alone or with others present;
- whether the token nudity was a few minutes or longer.[1]

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To these listings Yoder added an interpretive paragraph explaining that as part of the experimentation, he and whatever Christian sister he was with talked about "the reasoning behind" what they were doing, as well as "about unrelated matters (her ministry, friendships, future vocational choices), or past experiences which made this experience helpful. . . . Sometimes we talked about mutual friends. Usually we prayed."[2]

One might reasonably imagine that, upon reading this memo, President Miller called the police and pressed charges against the 51-year-old professor who was methodically perpetrating sexual violence on female students and presumably other women on campus. But this was 1979. Courts had not yet consistently defined sexual harassment, and employers were not predisposed to call in law enforcement to respond to violence against women. No educational institutions in the United States, from the Ivy League to the smallest church-affiliated schools, had yet developed procedures for students to file formal complaints about sexual harassment or assault.[3] Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), already well-established at larger institutions of higher education to safeguard the rights of human subjects in academic studies, did not yet exist at many private institutions, and certainly not at Goshen Biblical Seminary (G.B.S.).[4] Besides, the discipline underlying Yoder's methodology was not biology or psychology. Rather, as he explained to Miller, he was working from theological premises that included certain interpretations of the writings of Paul and the life of Jesus. And in 1979,

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are located in Elkhart, Ind. Sara Wenger Shenk, Daniel Miller, and Nelson Kraybill facilitated some of the interviews conducted for this study. The author wishes to thank Ben Goossen, Nelson Kraybill, Steve Nolt, Tom Prasch, Kerry Wynn, and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*'s editors for comments on earlier drafts.

1. Yoder to Miller, Dec. 6, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

2. Ibid.

3. Robin Wilson, "Why Colleges Are on the Hook in Cases of Sexual Assault," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 (June 2014), A10.

4. By 1979, Goshen Biblical Seminary, affiliated with the Mennonite Church (MC), had for two decades been in a cooperative arrangement with another educational institution, the Mennonite Biblical Seminary, affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church. Together, they were known as The Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, and each school had its own board and president but shared curricula and campus facilities in Elkhart, Indiana. Beginning in 1975, Miller served as president of Goshen Biblical Seminary; fifteen years later he also became president of Mennonite Biblical Seminary. In 1993 the two schools incorporated as one institution known as Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS). In 2012 AMBS changed its name to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. See C. J. Dyck, *The AMBS Story* (Elkhart, Ind.: Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 1996), 1-13, and "Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary" and "Goshen College Biblical Seminary," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO)*, http://www.gameo.org/.

given a decades-long relationship that included Yoder's role as Miller's intellectual mentor as well as his predecessor in the president's office at the seminary, Miller was worried about the injurious effects these extracurricular activities were having on Yoder's 27-year marriage.

There was another powerful reason why Miller called in neither law enforcement nor an attorney to draw up a severance package. John Howard Yoder, who was both a professor of theology at the nearby University of Notre Dame and an adjunct faculty member at Goshen Biblical Seminary, was a prodigious and prolific Mennonite leader, known widely for his writings and lectures on discipleship. More than two decades earlier, he had completed a doctorate at the University of Basel on the sixteenth-century dialogues between early Anabaptists and Reformed theologians, and had embarked on a Christocentric career that would take him to church assignments and academic posts in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. His 1972 book *The Politics of Jesus* was already considered a classic on religious pacifism, and his influence on denominational and theological institutions and across international academic circles was immense.[5]

Today, institutions—whether religious or educational, private or public, small or large—are expected to respond more directly to allegations of sexual misconduct than in the 1970s, the era in which Yoder's patterns of behavior emerged. Presently, steps for preventing and addressing sexual abuse are encoded in policies reflecting insights from multiple disciplines: psychology and sociology, ethics and law. Thus, this historical study, begun in 2013 at the invitation of Mennonite Church USA, reflects an ongoing and evolving effort to understand legacies of sexual abuse for all involved—victims, their families, coworkers or others who have knowledge of the abuse, and those who perpetrate harm.[6] Recent scholarship, including studies of abuse revelations in Roman Catholic dioceses, evangelical Christian missions, mainline Protestant parishes, and non-Christian religious contexts, suggests that sexual abuse is a pervasive problem in many religious

5. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972; rev. ed., 1994). In 2000, three years after Yoder's death, editors of *Christianity Today* named it one of the top ten books of the twentieth century.

6. The term "victims" is sometimes contested by persons who have experienced sexual abuse. Some prefer the language of "survivors" or "activists" in the aftermath of abuse. This article employs the term "victims" to convey past situations in which women experienced unwanted sexualized behavior from a person with academic and religious authority. This limited use of the terminology does not presume that these women regarded themselves as victims in perpetuity. On language preferences, see Kathleen M. Dwyer, "Surviving What I Know," in *Predatory Priests, Silenced Victims*, ed. Mary Frawley-O'Dea and Virginia Goldner (New York: Laurence Erlbaum, 2007), 108-109.

settings, due in part to the spiritual power attributed to leaders.[7] The sociologist Anson Shupe argues that the moral weight of religious traditions often renders believers vulnerable to leaders' abuses. This is because of "special authority" ascribed to clergypersons and because believers "expect the best—not the worst" from those they revere.[8] In response, local faith communities faced with accusations of abuse by their leaders may become defensive and "circle the wagons," either denying that sexual abuse occurred or blaming the victims for bringing the problem to the public's attention.[9]

This study focuses on the last twenty-five years of Yoder's life, when his sexual behaviors toward many women caused significant harm to them and, in some cases, to their spouses and other family members. As Marlin Miller and other Mennonite leaders learned of Yoder's behavior, the tendency to protect institutional interests—rather than seeking redress for women reporting sexual violation—was amplified because of Yoder's status as the foremost Mennonite theologian and because he conceptualized his behavior as an experimental form of sexual ethics. In a 1974 solicitation in which he appealed to women to engage with him, he wrote: "Only thanks to your friendship, sisterhood, can I do the theology."[10] Remarkably, Yoder was conveying that the women whom he persuaded to join him would be test subjects for him. They were tools for him to use in his quest to perfect Christian theology.

Precise numbers will never be known, but two mental health professionals who worked closely with Yoder from 1992 to 1995 as part of a Mennonite church accountability and discipline process believe that more than 100 women experienced unwanted sexual violations by

7. Anson Shupe, *In the Name of All That's Holy: A Theory of Clergy Malfeasance* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995); Anson Shupe, *Rogue Clerics: The Social Problem of Clergy Deviance* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2008); *Wolves within the Fold: Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power*, ed. Anson Shupe (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

8. Shupe, *In the Name*, 26.

9. Ibid.

10. Yoder, "A Call for Aid," 1974, p 3.—AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Peter Bromley and Clinton H. Cress, "Narratives of Sexual Danger," in Anson Shupe, et. al., *Bad Pastors: Clergy Misconduct in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 60. An unknown number of women received this letter or similar appeals from Yoder in his sexuality studies in the months and years immediately preceding and following his drafting of this letter in July 1974.—Martha Smith Good interview with author, June 27, 2014. In 1977, in another essay, Yoder downplayed the research aspects of his writings on sexuality, referring to "the low-priority, informal, non-academic attention which I have been giving to the issue of singleness."—Yoder, "Intergenerational Affection," March 11, 1977, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder.[11] Others knowledgeable about the experiences of Yoder's victims cite more than fifty as a conservative estimate.[12] Some who were victimized by him, as well as others knowledgeable about his activities, warned educational and church leaders about the dangers he posed.[13] Administrators at Mennonite institutions who knew of Yoder's sexual misconduct tended to keep decision-making close to the chest, a strategy of secrecy that resulted in information trickling out over a period of time.[14] Yoder's advances included making suggestive comments, sending sexually explicit correspondence, and surprising women with physical coercion. Since Yoder's death in 1997, additional women have come forward, confirming evidence from his writings to Marlin Miller and other confidantes that Yoder's activities ranged across a spectrum from sexual harassment in public places to, more rarely, sexual intercourse.[15] Some women found his sexual aggressions to be relatively inconsequential in their own lives. Other women's experiences were devastating, with trauma exacting a steep toll on marriages and careers.[16]

Initially, during the 1970s and early 1980s, Mennonite institutional responses to reports of Yoder's sexual violations were muted. At Goshen Biblical Seminary, President Miller conceived of a disciplinary process that he regarded as straightforward and biblical, and that he hoped would bring Yoder to accountability. Because Yoder cloaked his sexual behavior with women in theological language, and because his contributions to Christian thought centered on community as the locus for discipline, biblicism seemed crucial in framing the problem. Yoder himself had written and lectured extensively about the mandate of Matthew 18:15 for individual responsibility in confronting wrongdoing: "*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*"[17]

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11. Betty Hochstetler interview with author, June 5, 2014; John G. Kaufman interview with author, June 5, 2014. Hochstetler and Kaufman had been appointed to Yoder's Accountability and Support Group because of their expertise in mental health issues; Hochstetler held a D. Min. and Kaufman held A.C.S.W. accreditation.

12. Carolyn Holderread Heggen interview with author, June 4, 2014.

13. Carolyn Holderread Heggen, "Misconceptions and Victim Blaming," *The Mennonite*, Aug. 2014, 31.

14. Richard Kauffman interview with author, June 7, 2014.

15. "Discernment Group Update," June 19, 2014, http://www.mennoniteusa.org/an-update-from-the-discernment-group-on-sexual-abuse/.

16. "Questions," compiled by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, et. al., Spring 2014, in the author's possession.

17. Mt. 18:15, R.S.V. For Yoder's perspective on Mt. 18:15-20, see "Binding and Loosing," originally in *Concern #14, A Pamphlet Series for Questions of Church Renewal* (Scottdale, Pa.: The Concern Group, 1967), 2-32; see also Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 1-13. Mark Thiessen Nation contextualizes the "Concern" movement of the 1950s in light of

For Miller, the December 1979 memo in which Yoder outlined his experimenting-with-the-women project was disturbing, but not shocking. During the previous three years, Miller had already been confronting Yoder about his "relationships" with women, and the two Christian theologians were now engaged in a tug of words over how the conflict between Yoder's experimentation and seminary interests might be resolved by a faithful application of Matthew 18. At this point in their exchange of memoranda, Miller was impatiently but hopefully waiting to see how the scriptural promise of "If he listens to you" would play out. It would be a long wait. Meanwhile, Miller's casting the problem and its potential solution as biblical obfuscated actual abuses that were occurring on the seminary campus in young women's apartments, and in closed-door office spaces and hotel rooms around the world. The consequences of this peculiar disputation would be far-reaching.

One of the oddest phrases in Yoder's memo to Miller was "the 'defanging' of the 'beast.'" The purpose of his exploratory sexual activities, Yoder explained, depended on the needs of a given woman. Often, he intended "to confirm the safeness of closeness by demonstrating non-arousal." At other times, he wanted to help the woman he was with "overcome the fear/taboo feeling due to simple ignorance of anatomy." Or, in the less-frequent instances when Yoder engaged in what he called "partial/interrupted arousal," he did so to confirm to the woman—the object of his experimentation—that the "'defanging' of the 'beast' is really safe."[18] In subsequent discussions with Miller and others at Goshen Biblical Seminary, Yoder defined his activity of "partial/interrupted arousal" as genital penetration without ejaculation.[19] By "defanging the beast," he explained, he meant that he wanted to teach a woman who had expressed fear of sexual relations that what he called "familial intimacy" was demonstrably safe and not coerced—that is, not rape.[20]

Yoder's discipleship focus in *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 43-45.

18. Yoder to Miller, Dec. 6, 1979.—AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

19. Ibid. During the early 1980s, Yoder also described to Mennonite seminary leaders the technique of "stuffing," which he noted was genital penetration without ejaculation.—Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author, June 4, 2014; Marcus Smucker interview with author, July 7, 2014.

20. In his writings and discussions about intimacy, Yoder employed two similar adjectives. At some points he referred to "familiar intimacy" and at other times "familial intimacy." In a 1977 essay, he noted that these terms were interchangeable in his descriptions of certain kinds of relationships.—Yoder, "Affective Sources for Singles," July 1977, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; JHY Task Force meeting minutes, March 24, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files, in

Yoder's employing of metaphors—whether violent, as in "defanging the beast," or seemingly innocuous, as in his later use of the phrase "falling off the bike"—for his behaviors and intentions toward women confounded Marlin Miller. Unlike administrators in the twenty-first century who, in all likelihood, would think long and hard about ensuring campus safety for students, employees, and seminary guests, Miller in these earliest years of his presidency worried principally about how to preserve his star professor's marriage and career. Miller, an ordained minister and a creative, industrious scholar who had assumed the presidency while still in his mid-thirties, had been a protégé of Yoder's. In the early 1960s, at Yoder's suggestion, Miller had moved to Europe for advanced study at Basel with the theologian Karl Barth and then had completed doctoral studies at the University of Heidelberg. From 1968 to 1974, Miller had administered programs for the Mennonite Board of Missions in Paris, a role that brought him into collaborative interactions with Yoder, who had worked with the agency for several decades. After coming to Goshen Biblical Seminary to teach in 1974-1975, Miller had left his missions post in France to become the seminary president. Shortly after this transition, he had learned from members of Yoder's own family about what he initially regarded as Yoder's extramarital relationships.[21]

When in 1975 Miller ostensibly became Yoder's boss at the Elkhart seminary, Yoder began to call him "padre," or alternatively, "*père*."[22] In the years to come, Yoder's ironic and sometimes perverse use of language, and his conflating of religious and therapeutic explanations, would similarly confound and unsettle an expanding circle of Mennonite administrators. Clergy and laypersons alike—some of them "sworn to secrecy" and others fearful of consequences from speaking out—would find themselves trying to understand and respond to Yoder's theologizing of sexual behaviors between himself and women.[23]

In 1980, soon after receiving the "'defanging' of the 'beast'" memo, President Miller established a disciplinary process with a small cadre of insiders at the Goshen Biblical Seminary, an early and secretive attempt

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the author's possession. In 2015, The Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files will be made accessible for researchers at the MC USA Archives–Goshen.

21. Marlin Miller to AMBS Faculty, Staff, and Boards, July 2, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Gordon Dyck, notes from Church Life Commission meeting with Anne Yoder, Aug. 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Miller biographical information provided in interview of Ruthann Miller Brunk by Sara Wenger Shenk, Aug. 1, 2014.

22. Shellenberger interview with author.

23. Quotation from Larry Eby, "John Howard Yoder and the Original Seminary Board Process," email communication, Aug. 4, 2014, in the author's possession.

at accountability and discipline that lasted nearly four years. Ultimately, their efforts to stop Yoder's aggressions toward women would prove unsuccessful, and they would force his departure from Goshen Biblical Seminary. This collection of faculty and seminary board members, who drew up a "covenant" with Yoder and thus called themselves the "Covenant Group," would be the first of seven assemblages of Mennonites—some of them standing committees, others ad hoc—that challenged Yoder from within institutional bases. These Mennonite challengers and their eras of engagement with Yoder were:

1. Covenant Group, Goshen Biblical Seminary, 1980-1984
2. Confidential Task Force, Goshen Biblical Seminary, 1982
3. Board of Elders, Prairie Street Mennonite Church, 1986
4. Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force, 1991-1992
5. Church Life Commission, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1992-1996
6. Accountability and Support Group, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1992-1996
7. Executive Board, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1992-1997[24]

These groups had varying goals: to engage Yoder intellectually in hopes of grasping what merits there might be in his unconventional notions about sexuality; to investigate rumors of his sexual misdeeds; to discipline him; or some combination of the above, occasionally in tandem with trying to arrange for face-to-face meetings between women accusers and Yoder as a step toward forgiveness and reconciliation.[25] No group succeeded completely in challenging Yoder's unwanted behavior toward women. For the last two decades of his life, Yoder discussed, sparred, and negotiated with these various parties. In all cases, people grew weary after a few months or years of engagement. Like Miller in the beginning, each group sought to "counsel" their Christian brother rather than to have him arrested or expelled. Persons who through employment or credentials entered the fray from outside the denomination felt stonewalled, not only by Yoder himself but also by the

24. Documentation for the Covenant Group, the 1982 Confidential Task Force, and the 1986 Board of Elders accountability efforts is in the AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen. Documentation for the Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force of 1991-92 is in the author's possession, provided by James Lapp. Documentation for the Church Life Commission, the Accountability and Support Group, and the Executive Board of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference is in the MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen.

25. "Charge to JHY Task Force," 1991-92, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

secrecy surrounding his behavior, which served to protect Mennonite institutional interests. In 1985, for example, a young pastor named Charlie Cooper arrived in Elkhart to serve Prairie Street Mennonite Church, the congregation of which Yoder had been a member for years. Cooper had been on the job only a few months when he and the congregation's leadership council, the Board of Elders, decided to confront Yoder about reports of ongoing sexual misbehavior. Years later, Cooper recalled: "I asked him, [taking a] personal, relational, pastoral approach, and was made dizzy by his verbiage, re-directs, subjugations, semantics. . . . To this day [I] have *no idea* what-the-[expletive] JHY *did*!"[26] When Cooper appealed for help from Mennonite leaders in the community, those who knew the history of Yoder's sexual violations were not sharing.[27]

While at some junctures Yoder's history of sexual abuse is impervious, many aspects of this story are becoming clearer. Although Yoder's personal papers on this subject—housed at the Mennonite Church USA Archives—remain closed until 2047, other documentation is now accessible. More than two dozen Mennonite men and women involved in various accountability efforts kept, either in institutional files or in home storage, the written records generated by their efforts. By the 1990s, documents in the form of memoranda, handwritten notes, meeting minutes, and mental health records had piled up. Still, leaders of Mennonite accountability groups sought to control and contain information, and not all the materials survived. As one leader queried another, "We have a considerable amount that needs shredding. Do you know where we could have this done?"[28] Time and again, systemic destruction of files pertaining to Yoder's sexual abuse occurred. But the immense paper trail was uncontainable. And the memory bank of individuals could still be accessed.[29]

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26. Quotation from Charlie Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

27. Charlie Cooper to Marlin Miller, Dec. 24, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

28. Atlee Beechy to Sherm Kauffman, May 8, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

29. The John Howard Yoder Papers at the Mennonite Church USA Archives–Goshen include "Sexual Harassment Charges and Conference Discipline" documents in Box 240, restricted until 2047, fifty years after Yoder's death. Individuals who in 2014 granted interviews to the author include Jean Bender, John Bender, Gordon Dyck, "Elena" (pseudonym), Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Simon Gingerich, Martha Smith Good, Judy Harder, Keith Harder, Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Betty Hochstetler, Loren Johns, Richard Kauffman, Sherm Kauffman, Nancy Kauffmann, John G. Kaufman, Gayle Gerber Koontz, Ted Koontz, J. Nelson Kraybill, James Lapp, "Maureen" (pseudonym), Mary Ellen Meyer, Ben Ollenburger, "Rosalie" (pseudonym), Walter Sawatsky, Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, Willard Swartley, Everett Thomas, and Harold Yoder.

UNWELCOME SEXUAL ADVANCES

The decades-long sweep of this story, and its propensity to inspire public debate, requires careful attention to late-twentieth-century shifts in laws addressing sexual behavior. Legal considerations of sexual harassment have historically been guided by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sex discrimination in the workplace, and by definitions established by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Prior to the 1970s, federal courts did not recognize sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, dismissing it as mere flirtation.[30] In 1976, U.S. federal courts began considering cases related to sexual harassment in the workplace. A decade later, the first U.S. Supreme Court case to address sexual harassment linked it to hostile working environments and held that the viability of sexual harassment claims depended on whether the advances were "unwelcome."[31] During the 1980s, the federal gender-equity law, Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act, began to be cited in court cases in which female students argued that sexual harassment was discriminatory and, therefore, illegal.[32] In the 1990s, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed cases involving teachers' sexual overtures toward students, and, in 2001, the federal Education Department issued a new standard establishing sexual harassment as discriminatory, mandating that educational institutions take preventative steps in addressing sexual harassment and eliminating hostile environments in which persons are intimidated.[33]

Over the past four decades, legal considerations guiding definitions of sexual harassment have expanded as a result of increased attention to the experiences of female students and workers, often spurred by

30. The term "sexual harassment" was coined in 1975 by feminists in Ithaca, N.Y.; this history is recounted in Caroline A. Forell and Donna M. Matthews, "Men, Women, and Sex at Work," in *Sexual Harassment: Cases, Case Studies, & Commentary*, ed. Paul I. Weizer (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 229.

31. The case was *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986); Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 4-5.

32. The best-known case using Title IX (1972) to establish that sexual harassment can be considered discriminatory is *Alexander v. Yale University* (1980). In its decision, the U.S. District Court ruled against the plaintiffs, but the case prompted Yale University and other schools to institute formal grievance procedures.

33. Wilson, "Why Colleges are on the Hook," A10; see also Jimmy Carter, *A Call to Action: Women, Religion, Violence and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 44. Landmark cases addressing educational settings include *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* (1992) and *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* (1999). On federal guidelines, see "Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties, Title IX," Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2001, https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/pdf/shguide.pdf.

feminist activists.[34] As legal attention to sexual harassment has evolved, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines have provided frameworks for determining when unwelcome sexual advances and requests for sexual favors constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment may be physical (such as kissing, hugging, pinching, patting, grabbing, blocking the victim's path, or leering at the victim), or verbal (either oral or written), and can include requests.[35] Commission guidelines note that acts of physical aggression or intimidation are sometimes combined with incidents of sexual harassment, further establishing evidence of abuse.[36] Although these definitions for sexual harassment became mainstream after Yoder had begun his project, his continued advances toward women through the 1980s coincided with cultural shifts in which notions of sexual harassment came to be regarded, both within Mennonite circles and beyond, as directly applicable to his actions.

Yoder's legacies of sexual abuse were deeply harmful within his own Mennonite community in northern Indiana and well beyond his academic bases. A highly mobile professor and churchman, he approached (mostly Mennonite) women both near and far from home, violating contemporary general understandings of propriety. For more than two decades, three key institutions—his part-time employer, Goshen Biblical Seminary; his local congregation, Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart; and the regional Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, which held his ministerial credential—all responded to reports of Yoder's sexual misconduct. With no legal charges ever filed, adjudication, such as it was, took place in local Mennonite settings—seminary lecture halls, conference quarters, and living rooms—often involving Mennonites who were also closely connected to Yoder through collegiality, educational history, congregational fraternity, or even family relationships. Despite the faith community's longstanding commitment to nonviolence and its polity emphasis on local authority rather than entrenched hierarchies, these Mennonite leaders' interventions, while often well-intentioned, were largely ineffectual.[37]

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34. Campaigns against sexual violence in the context of U.S. governmental systems are the focus of Kristin Bumiller's *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

35. Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 5-6. On the E.E.O.C. guidelines, see Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 299-339 and "Sexual Harassment," http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/sexual+harassment.

36. Weizer, *Sexual Harassment*, 335.

37. "Comments from Victims for the Yoder Discernment Group," compiled by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, et. al., May 2014, in the author's possession.

Yoder also had a variety of other agency and institutional affiliations. His colleagues at *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (where he served on the board of editors for more than thirty years), Mennonite Board of Education, Mennonite Board of Missions, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Historical Society, and Herald Press all played some role in responding to reports—often circulated informally—that he was engaging in inappropriate sexual activities. And by the 1990s, as evidence mounted that his actions toward women were often detrimental, three Mennonite liberal arts colleges—Yoder's alma mater, Goshen College, in Indiana, as well as Bethel College in Kansas and Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia—were grappling with whether or not to welcome him as a visiting speaker on their campuses.[38] But as scholars Brian Hamilton and Kyle Lambelet point out, Yoder's professional reputation suffered only marginally. He was never formally disciplined by the broader academic and religious peers with whom he was closely affiliated, including his employer, the University of Notre Dame, and the Society of Christian Ethics, where he served a term as president in 1987-1988. Institutional problems of whether and how to respond to reports of Yoder's sexual abuse extended well beyond the realm of Mennonite leaders. Yet even though Yoder's sexual violations were known beyond the Mennonite world, those with the power to discipline him seem to have abdicated that responsibility.[39]

The noted sociologist Andrew Greeley has written of sexual abuse and institutional response mostly in the context of American Catholic hierarchies, but his insights cut across religious lines. "The clerical elite," he argues,

> will rally around the accused person because an attack on him is an attack on the whole elite. . . . For the sexual abuser this provides an almost perfect situation. You can exploit, and your colleagues will protect you from the effects of your exploitation either by denying it or finding you another place to exercise your power.[40]

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38. In the mid-1980s, Goshen College instituted a policy to prohibit Yoder from visiting campus, but made an exception in the early 1990s when the college hosted a Believers Church conference that Yoder had helped to plan. On 1990s-era controversies over invitations for Yoder to speak, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, "Campus Protests and John Howard Yoder," *Mennonite Life (*forthcoming, 2015).

39. Hamilton and Lambelet argue that scholars have a continuing responsibility to interrogate Yoder's theological work with his history of sexual violence in mind. This includes not only his writings on human sexuality, but more importantly, his writings on peace and nonviolence. See "A Dark Theme Revisited: How to Read Yoder's Sexualized Violence," unpublished, 2014, in the author's possession.

40. Andrew Greeley, review of *Spoils of the Kingdom* by Anson Shupe, *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 37 (March 2008), 142.

Of course, Catholicism's management of priests' abuse of parishioners, like Mennonite responses to Yoder's sexual abuse of women, reveals more nuance than Greeley's indictment suggests. In this particular Mennonite drama, with its Catholic (Notre Dame) overtones, institutional processes lasted over two decades and ranged over multiple locales. Meanwhile, ideas about what to do kept changing. From the 1970s through the 1990s, terms such as "accountability" and "confidentiality" were laden with shifting and contested meanings. The concepts "sexual harassment" and "sexual abuse" had far more cultural cachet in the 1990s (when Yoder's abuses came to an end) than in the 1970s when President Miller first confronted him. Secrecy aside, whenever groups of Mennonites who were engaged in confronting Yoder *did* talk among themselves, these framing complexities often led them to talk past one another rather than with one another. As these exertions played out, wordsmithing, as well as the passage of time, worked to Yoder's advantage.

Yet during the 1980s and continuing into the early 1990s, the secrecy that had veiled Yoder's sexual violence in preceding decades began to collapse. Some of the women who had experienced Yoder's sexual aggressiveness but had previously been unknown to each other initiated conversations, recorded their experiences on paper, and leveraged their collective will to force Mennonite leaders to stop his abuse.[41] Whether they responded to his sexual aggressiveness as merely offensive and with rebuff, or with feelings of violation, anguish, betrayal, and anger, the residue was a lifetime of wariness about sexual power plays.[42] Their efforts at whistle-blowing—never formalized as an ongoing "group" response because they lacked the capital and infrastructure that Mennonite institutions possessed—culminated with several dramatic events in 1992, a turning point in the denomination's dealings with Yoder. Many people came to know at least a little about his harmful

41. Feminist theory on victimization highlights the importance of constructing narrative, as well as finding supportive listeners, for survivors of sexual abuse to develop control over events that they experienced as traumatizing. Over time, according to philosopher and trauma survivor Susan Brison, this process "reintegrates the survivor into a community, reestablishing her trust in others."—Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), xi. See also Diane Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 85.

42. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author, July 8, 2014; "Maureen" (pseudonym) interview with author; Good interview with author; Heggen interview with author; handwritten notes of James Lapp, March 27, 1991, in the author's possession; confidential statement from eight women to the JHY Task Force, 4-page typescript, Feb. 21-22, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. On sexual victims' range of responses to clergy abuse, see G. Lloyd Rediger, *Ministry and Sexuality: Cases, Counseling, Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 23-24.

past.[43] An avalanche of news stories that year, from accounts in *The Bethel* (Kansas) *Collegian* and *The Mennonite Weekly Review* to the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*, linked Yoder's name to credible reports by women of having been sexually abused.[44] These initial press reports were thin on detail, but the ramifications of what some Christian theologians would later call "scandalizing John Howard Yoder" were enormous.[45] Despite all of its twists and turns with Mennonite officialdom and women's agency, this saga would fall short of reconciliation.

Mapping a New Christian Social Ethics

Constructing a narrative about the scope of Yoder's sexual abuse and Mennonite responses to it is more conceivable now than in earlier decades, when secrecy held sway. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century accounts of Yoder's life (1927-1997) and his influence in word and deed appear in published sources that include a substantial obituary in *The New York Times*, a biography, and a new memoir recounting the life of Yoder's wife, Anne.[46] Mark Thiessen Nation, in his 2006 volume *John Howard Yoder*, describes a boyhood in northeastern Ohio, undergraduate studies at Goshen College, and subsequent European postwar relief work through a Mennonite Central Committee assignment where Yoder met a young French Mennonite, Anne Guth. In 1952 the couple married.[47] Yoder's formulation of a specifically Christian sexual ethic, or

43. For an account of how dawning awareness of Yoder's sexualized theology led others in academe to distance themselves, see Gerald Schlabach, "Only Those We Need Can Betray Us," July 10, 2014, http://www.geraldschlabach.net/2014/07/10/only-those-we-need-can-betray-us-my-relationship-with-john-howard-yoder-and-his-legacy.

44. Kimberly Cott, "Yoder Disinvited to Conference," *Bethel Collegian*, March 5, 1992, 1; Paul Schrag, "Bethel Withdraws Invitation for Theologian to Speak; Sexual Misconduct Alleged," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 12, 1992, 3; Peter Steinfels, "Religion Notes: Ministerial Transgressions," *The New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1992; "Mennonite Theologian Disciplined," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1992, 8. The source for the *Tribune* article was Religious News Service, which reported in news outlets across the nation that Yoder had "admitted to charges of sexual misconduct."

45. "Scandalizing John Howard Yoder" is the title of an investigative piece by David Cramer, Jenny Howell, Jonathan Tran, and Paul Martens, July 7, 2014, http://theotherjournal.com/2014/07/07scandalizing-john-howard-yoder/. For a brief interpretation of the ironies of "reconciliation" in Yoder's legacy, see Mark Oppenheimer, "A Theologian's Influence, and Stained Past, Lives On," The *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 2013, A14.

46. Peter Steinfels, "John H. Yoder, Theologian at Notre Dame, Is Dead at 70," *The New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1998, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/07/us/john-h-yoder-theologian-at-notre-dame-is-dead-at-70.htm; Nation, *John Howard Yoder*; Anne Marie Guth Yoder with Rebecca Yoder Neufeld, *What I Hold Precious* (N.p.: St. Jacobs Printer Ltd.), 2013.

47. Nation, *John Howard Yoder*, 17. Nation referred in his biography to what he termed "allegations regarding inappropriate sexual activity" (25, n. 92). More recently, Nation offered additional perspectives on Yoder's history of sexual harassment and sexual abuse

at least his early articulations of its roots, stretch back to his post-World War II years in Europe. As a young man he spoke to friends and family about "trying to live as if not married when you were married, from I Corinthians 7:29: 'from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none.'"[48] His wife recalled years later that

> He once preached on I Corinthians when we were engaged and it scared me a bit. "He who refrains from marriage will do better." (I Corinthians 7:38). He had this admiration for people who did not need to get married, who had complete dedication to the work. He thought it was better to be single, and would say: "*Soyons plus comme eux*; let us be more like them." He talked about how single people could give themselves more fully to service. . . . In any case John's married life certainly didn't keep him from giving full time to the church's business.[49]

By 1970, Yoder, his wife, and their six children were living in Elkhart, Indiana, and he was president of Goshen Biblical Seminary. As acting dean (as well as president) during the 1972-1973 academic year, Yoder took an interest, along with his colleague Erland Waltner, then serving as Mennonite Biblical Seminary's president, in reports that a group of a dozen or more female seminary students and working women were holding weekly meetings in a student apartment.[50] This consciousness-raising group was discussing the women's movement, reading books on feminist theology, and musing over how to incorporate these interests into their studies. Already, they and their families had established a cooperative daycare facility with financial and administrative support from the seminary. At the same time, they were aware of ongoing tensions with an older group of women (faculty wives and women with adjunct teaching roles) whose perspectives on gender roles in family and church settings were comparatively traditional. In the spring of 1973, the younger women made a proposal to a skeptical President Waltner: they would develop a women's studies course. Within months they gained administrative approval and developed the first class on feminist theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries.[51]

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in "On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder," coauthored with Marva Dawn, Sept. 23, 2013, http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/.

48. Yoder, *What I Hold Precious,* 88.

49. Ibid.

50. Martha Smith Good, email to author, July 8, 2014; Dorothy Nickel Friesen, "Women Changing," typescript, 1973, in Friesen's possession.

51. Dorothy Nickel Friesen interview with author, July 17, 2014.

As it turned out, the class "Women in Church and Society" was a campus hit. During the fall 1973 semester, the 15-week evening seminar drew an enrollment of more than fifty people. The course had an unusual format. Faculty and students shared responsibility for convening weekly sessions and hosting guest speakers who presented on topics ranging from women in biblical times, to the roots of the American feminist movement, to abortion.[52] Yoder had volunteered to serve as faculty advisor for the course, and as the liaison with the student conveners he took responsibility for administrative duties, including grading. Many auditors and off-campus guests attended the class, including Yoder's wife, Anne, who wanted to hear what young women on campus were saying about changing roles for women in society.[53]

The curricular addition of "Women in Church and Society" at A.M.B.S., contemporaneous with the tide of women's studies at graduate-level institutions arising across the U.S. and Canada, represented an early effort by young second-wave feminists struggling to find their places in ministerial vocations and other religious settings. At the time of this inaugural course offering, no Mennonite woman had yet completed a Master of Divinity degree at A.M.B.S. Mennonite congregations had not begun hiring women as professional, ordained ministers. Accordingly, professors at the Elkhart seminary routinely advised female students to "go into teaching" or to pursue a Master in Religious Education degree.[54]

In the 1973-1974 academic year, graduates of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries were all men. The faculty included very few women, concentrated in areas such as Christian Education and language study. But changes were coming. The registrar's annual records show that, over the decade, the proportion of women enrolled at the seminary increased from 6 percent to 37 percent:

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52. Student planners included Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Carole Hull, and Rachel Friesen.—Dorothy Nickel Friesen, email to author, July 10, 2014; Dorothy Nickel Friesen, "Women in Church and Society," *Window*, AMBS publication, Dec. 1973; course syllabus listed in John Howard Yoder memo to Weyburn Groff, Dec. 17, 1976, in Friesen's possession.

53. Friesen, "Women in Church and Society"; JHY Task Force meeting minutes, March 24, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; "Women in Church and Society Course Evaluation," 1973, in Friesen's possession. Nearly two decades later, Anne Yoder told Mennonite church officials investigating reports of her husband's past sexual misconduct that she had attended the class in part because she feared that her husband was interested in talk of sexual liberation—in vogue at the time—and that he would not be able to resist overtures from women.—JHY Task Force meeting minutes, March 24, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

54. Friesen interview with author.

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979[55]
Men	82	82	87	87	94	116	129	123	133	139
Women	5	14	16	36	49	52	63	55	66	83
% Women	6%	15%	15%	29%	34%	31%	33%	31%	33%	37%

In coming years, some of the participants in the "Women in Church and Society" course would be among the first women licensed and ordained in Mennonite settings.

By the fall semester of 1973, Yoder stepped down as Goshen Biblical Seminary's president, and his colleague Joseph Hertzler became interim president. Soon thereafter, in 1975, Marlin Miller would start his nearly two-decade tenure as president of G.B.S. Meanwhile, Yoder, freed from administrative responsibilities, began to write on what he termed "the dignity of single persons."[56] It was common practice at the Mennonite seminaries in Elkhart for faculty to circulate for discussion drafts on any number of theological topics: nonresistance, Calvinism, eschatology. With the "Women in Church and Society" class creating a popular forum for discussing gender and family roles, Yoder's distribution of relevant essays spiked. Through the mid-1970s, Yoder circulated at least a dozen unpublished papers among colleagues, students, and friends.[57] In one of these, written in 1977 and reflecting on the history of his conceptualizations about marriage and relationships, Yoder noted:

> My initial thinking and informal writing on the subject of the dignity of single persons arose from a context of institutional and pastoral concerns. . . . I was bothered by the way I saw agencies, including church agencies, dealing with single persons as less worthy of respect or of responsibility. Secondly, I saw the unhealthy effects which the drive toward early marriage had upon the quality

55. Weyburn Groff, "Number of Female Students," July 20, 1983, typescript in Friesen's possession. On part-time and full-time enrollments at G.B.S. and M.B.S., see Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Ventures of Faith: The Story of Mennonite Biblical Seminary* (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 1975), 103.

56. Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," July 1977, p. 1.

57. One unpublished essay appeared in the decade previous to the essays discussed here. See Yoder, "When is a Marriage not a Marriage," 1968, addressed initially to "interested Mennonite churchmen" and later circulated more broadly to seminary students and others.—AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

> of the marriages of those who settle upon a marriage partner very early because of the fear of remaining single.[58]

In this same essay, which he cautioned was neither for publication nor quotation, Yoder wrote that in 1974 he had begun to develop "the notion of a distinction between two dimensions of sexuality, the familiar and the genital."[59] His ideas, he said, were "exploratory and noncommittal," and he solicited "critical reactions of all kinds" from those to whom he was circulating his work. He noted that "the prude and the pornographer agree that the only genuine or natural expression of bodily affection is genital."[60] But biblical exegesis offered an alternative to consider: "From Jesus, if we understand him correctly," Yoder added, ". . . we are now able to say that freedom of bodily affection and intimacy is not necessarily correlated with the satisfaction of genital drives."[61] In present-day society, among people who struggle with inhibitions, Yoder suggested that "there will need to be some experience of therapeutic tension and adjustments."[62] Further, he speculated that persons plagued either by inhibitions about sexual intercourse or by promiscuity would have difficulty attaining what he termed "the freedom of the Gospel," which Yoder linked to Jesus' encounters with women:

> . . . the freedom of the Gospel, the freedom which Jesus lived out with women who touched him and whose status as sexual victims was an immediate part of his ministry to them.[63]

As would become apparent to many individuals with whom Yoder interacted in the coming years, this reference to Jesus and "women who touched him" were not idle words. For the theologian whose depiction of Christian discipleship in *The Politics of Jesus* was empowering, such politics in a decade of women's liberation were now becoming personal.[64]

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58. Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," July 1977, 1. For an example of Yoder's thinking on this topic as early as 1973, see his revised essay "Singleness in Ethical and Pastoral Perspective," in *Being Single: Resources on Singleness*, ed. David Selzer (New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1986), 72-95.

59. Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," July 1977, pp. 1, 6. Yoder began this essay with the caveat that, unlike his earlier treatises on similar topics, this one "should not be passed on to persons uninformed about, or unready to respect the confidential personal and church context within which this exploration is undertaken."

60. Ibid; quotations are on pp. 1 and 11.

61. Ibid, 11.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid, 12.

64. Yoder also critiqued contemporary feminist intellectual currents. In an essay focused on Jesus' countercultural engagement with women in antiquity, Yoder emphasized the

What explains Yoder's evolution into this speculative thinking in the decade of the 1970s? Yoder's popularity as a Mennonite leader was closely tied to his own celebrated work in postwar writings about Mennonite peace theology, which meant that he both wrote about and embodied a normative and laudable form of Mennonite masculinity. This enhanced his status especially with other male leaders and made it unlikely for them to question or critique him. And Yoder's Christology, centered on a "political" Jesus imbued with social forms of power, offered resources for speaking and writing about the historical man whose spiritual freedom Yoder venerated.[65] Yoder thought speculatively about Jesus' sexuality as a model for his disciples, for the men who followed in his path. Still, while Yoder circulated his ideas about "familiar" or "familial" sexuality (terms he used interchangeably in his unpublished papers with the terms "non-genital" and "non-erotic"), he also called for "confidentiality" in circulating such ideas about men's and women's touching:

> It follows that when we exercise modesty and confidentiality with regard to the expression of the alternative style being talked about in this paper, we do not do so simply out of social cowardice or a failure to stand up for what we believe in. We do it, as did the apostle Paul, out of respect for the integrity of those who could not help but misunderstand this liberty and who therefore would be harmed by seeing it lived out in front of them.[66]

In this passage, Yoder left unnamed those he thought would be "harmed" by seeing heterosexual activity manifested outside of marriage. Certainly, there were those close to home as well as Mennonite seminary constituents who, he pointed out to Marlin Miller, clung to conventional ideas about sexuality.[67] Yoder closed his essay: "If . . . we

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freedom and dignity that Jesus had afforded to women, concluding: "It is obvious that on this basis woman finds a basis for her dignity which is far deeper and broader than much recent talk about 'liberation'."—Yoder, "What is 'Adultery of the Heart'?," 1975, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

65. For essays exploring Yoder's peace theology and his perspectives on mission, see *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz (Telford, Pa.: Cascadia, 2004), and *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, ed. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Westmont, Ill.: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2013).

66. Quotation from Yoder, "Affective Resources for Singles," p. 12. The notions of "familiar," "non-erotic," "non-genital" sexuality are used as synonyms.—Yoder to Marlin Miller and Ross Bender, "My Thoughts on Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality," April 19, 1977, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

67. Yoder to Miller and Bender, "My Thoughts on Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality," April 19, 1977, AMBS Marlin Miller John Howard Yoder Files; see also Yoder to Miller, memo titled "Employment and Related Matters," Jan. 25, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

live in too safe a society where no risks are taken and therefore no emotional rewards can be reached, . . . then we would need a specific argument and visible modeling to make clear the fruitfulness and propriety of a freer expression of affection."[68] One of Yoder's colleagues at Goshen Biblical Seminary, academic dean Ross T. Bender, responded heartily to the portion of Yoder's essay that sounded a cautionary note, observing that Yoder's advocacy for "considerably greater physical/emotional freedom" would be unacceptable to Mennonites, and for that matter, to other Christians. It would instead, Bender insisted, "surely bring the roof down on our heads."[69]

But Yoder cast such worries aside. As he took steps to engage women more freely on the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries campus, his professed interest in the dignity of singleness was overlaid with an interest in heterosexual relations outside of marriage. If roles for men and women were changing, he was willing to test his ideas by a literal laying on of hands. During one incident, while driving in 1973 to present lectures at a theology conference at Calvin College in Michigan, he took along as a passenger a young married Mennonite Biblical Seminary student he knew from campus. She was employed part-time as a writer for a Mennonite agency and had work to do at the conference. Earlier, Yoder had given her one of his thought-pieces on Christian family relationships, and during the car trip he told her he'd like to discuss it: What can we do, as Christian brothers and sisters, he asked. He reached over for her hand and held it, asking: "Is this O.K.? Can we do this?" She was surprised and did not immediately say no. For the past year that she had been at the seminary, he had been supportive of her interest in feminism and her intellectual aspirations. She valued him as a mentor. When he released his hand from hers, he placed it at her knee. As he drove on his hand moved up, grazing along her thigh. Shocked, she demanded that he stop, that he never do that again. He pulled his hand away. They arrived at their destination, participated in the conference program, and afterwards she warily rode back to Indiana with him. For the time being, it seemed, he was done testing ideas of Christian familiarity with her.[70]

But there were plenty of women in Yoder's world—in cars, offices, classrooms, and church settings—and he had time to hone his

68. Yoder, "Affective Sources for Singles," 13.

69. Ross Bender, typescript response to John Howard Yoder, 1977, in the author's possession, provided by Mary Ellen Meyer.

70. Maureen (pseudonym) interview with author. This was the first of two times during the 1970s that she experienced unwanted sexual behavior by Yoder. Years later, as an AMBS employee, she learned details of his more flagrant violations of other women, and kept her office door locked in the evenings, fearful of his movements around the campus.

methodologies. Some women who knew him in a variety of settings would assert that his personal attentiveness had been positive and broadening, and they appreciated his friendship.[71] A generation later, professionals knowledgeable about sexual abuse would label Yoder's range of opportunistic approaches as "grooming" behaviors, subtle come-ons that suggested to whomever he was engaging with that he valued her intellect and collaboration. In a letter he had begun distributing in August 1974 which he titled "A Call for Aid," Yoder wrote:

> I am being led into a kind of theological, ethical, and psychological study for which I need your help. . . . They are delicate themes, not for publication. . . . If, as my marriage paper argues, marriage is indissolubly monogamous and is publically celebrated and institutionally reinforced, – and if as my singleness paper pleads, singleness can be maturely chosen and publically celebrated, – then any two people of the two sexes, who have openly graduated from the age of courtship, whether by marriage or into singleness know where they stand and are free, as led by need, opportunity, and counsel, to relate for whatever interaction of woman-liness/manliness is needed, with the clearly drawn line, publicly recognized, that excludes the genital.[72]

Women reading the closing paragraphs of Yoder's letter would find a guileful appeal, prompting some of them to respond with sharp retorts and personal distancing, and others to move closer into his circle:

> I send this to you because at one and the same time you represent to me 1) a sister given to me in Christian mutuality, 2) a person with experience in mature singleness, 3) a person of broad experience with others in single circumstances, 4) a mind able to respond critically to defensiveness. . . . This subject is at once personal friendship, personal counseling, and theological ethics.[73]

Like another larger-than-life figure of the era, Henry Kissinger—who one year earlier had been quoted widely for saying "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac"—Yoder employed variants in exercising clout.[74] Appealing to intellect and friendship were persistent recruitment techniques as he reached out to women both on and off campus. Some

71. See, for example, letter from "A Concerned 'Sister'" to Marlin Miller, Dec. 6, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-8-001.

72. Yoder, "A Call for Aid," 1974, pp. 1-2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

73. Ibid., 3.

74. Kissinger quoted in *The New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1973.

were students or employees of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart. Many others he met at academic and church conferences or on his periodic trips to Europe and elsewhere as part of his scholar/churchman portfolio. He received responses from a number of women who cut him off immediately. Ethel Yake Metzler, for example, a married professional mental health counselor in northern Indiana who had known Yoder since attending Goshen College with him three decades earlier, turned away his phone calls to her home in which he asked for lunch dates. She scrawled "This is ridiculous" on a paper he sent her on heterosexual intimacy outside of marriage, later reflecting that rejecting Yoder's advances was easier for her than for many others; she was the same age as he was and she considered him a peer, not an authority figure.[75]

In his unpublished writings on Christian relationships, Yoder incorporated references to intentional communities, some of which were just coming into existence and had Mennonite affiliations. One of these was Reba Place in Evanston, Illinois, which Yoder visited on a number of occasions and where he conversed with elders. In 1973, Reba Place had issued community guidelines for heterosexual practice. While advocating prohibitions on premarital and extramarital intercourse, Reba Place's leaders noted that "each single person should have a combination of relationships within which their interpersonal needs can be met to an extent which is equivalent to that enjoyed by those who are happily married."[76] Yoder also engaged in conversations with members of the Fellowship of Hope, a Mennonite intentional community in the Elkhart neighborhood where he had earlier owned property, and to which he and his wife had sold their home during his term as president of Goshen Biblical Seminary.[77] Yoder was interested in the ethics of communal living, and all through the 1970s, he discussed with participants in intentional Christian living arrangements the biblical, economic, and cultural dimensions of their communities, which typically included both married and unmarried members. Yoder also served as a consultant to the Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C., and to the broader network known as "Community of Communities."[78]

75. Ethel Yake Metzler, email to author, July 31, 2014.

76. "Friendship, Courtship and Marriage in Christian Community," typescript, Reba Place, Evanston, Illinois, c. 1973, in the author's possession.

77. The Yoders had then purchased and moved to another house on Benham Avenue in Elkhart, directly across from the seminary campus.

78. Keith Harder interview with author, July 12, 2014; Judy Harder interview with author, July 12, 2014; Anne Yoder, *What I Hold Precious*, 158; discussion of interpersonal relationships at Reba Place Fellowship appears in a three-page typescript, author unknown, titled "Friendship, Courtship and Marriage in Christian Community," undated.—A.M.B.S. Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Nation, *John*

In addition to traveling and consulting, Yoder was expanding his institutional and employment bases. In 1976, he negotiated a full-time faculty contract with the University of Notre Dame, where he had been teaching part time since the 1967-1968 academic year. Yoder's publications and lectures around the world had catapulted him to high standing and he wanted to be mindful, he told Marlin Miller, of "the best stewardship of my remaining time."[79] By shoring his base at Notre Dame, he hoped to affirm his independence from Mennonite denominational agencies, having worked with them for twenty-five years.[80] He saw his own "originality and efficacy as thinker and teacher," he told Miller, as bridging the interests of Mennonites and other Christian groups.[81] Already, in his previous engagements with the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and other organizations, Yoder had encountered more satisfaction "than in the tent-making tasks of mission administration and seminary curriculum."[82] Enlarging his ecumenical platform was a liberating move.

Beginning in 1977 and continuing to his death in 1997, Yoder maintained full professor status at Notre Dame. As part of these employment adjustments, Miller arranged for him to continue teaching in Elkhart in a "permanent" adjunct position for which Goshen Biblical Seminary purchased some of Yoder's time from Notre Dame.[83] This dual school arrangement, which lasted seven more years until Yoder's forced resignation from Goshen Biblical Seminary, provides the backstory for Miller's man-to-man approach in dealing with Yoder's sexualized behavior on and around the seminary campus.[84]

By the end of the 1970s, Miller was documenting a surge of disturbing incidents involving Yoder. During the 1978-1979 academic year, for example, Yoder's seminary office neighbor and colleague in New Testament studies, Willard Swartley, witnessed a distressing scene. Late

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Howard Yoder, 23, n. 87. For brief histories of these communities, see www.rebaplacefellowship.org/Who_We_Are/History; www.fellowshipofhope.org/history; and www.sojo.net/-about-us/history.

79. Yoder and Miller, joint document titled "Vocational Review of John H. Yoder," c. 1975, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

80. Ibid., 3.

81. Ibid., 2.

82. Ibid. For Yoder's employment history in the 1950s and 1960s, see Nation, *John Howard Yoder*, 21-22.

83. Miller to Yoder, "Adjunct Faculty Position/GBS," March 15, 1976, AMBS Marlin-Miller-John Howard Yoder Files; Yoder to David Burrell and Marlin Miller, Dec. 14, 1976, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Nation, *John Howard Yoder*, 23.

84. On the resignation, see Yoder to Miller, May 4, 1984, and Evelyn Shellenberger to Yoder, June 1, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

one evening Swartley arrived at the seminary to prepare for teaching the next day and flipped on a switch in his classroom. The lights revealed Yoder in a chair with a woman kneeling between his knees. A startled Swartley left the classroom. He was unsure of the identity of the woman, but believed she was a student. Returning to his office the next morning, he found that Yoder had left him a signed note in which he said that he had been helping—that is, counseling—the young woman. Swartley did not confront Yoder about this incident directly, but reported it to Miller, who replied that he was not surprised. As Swartley later remembered it, Miller told him that he had received letters about Yoder's activities with a number of women.[85]

In this instance, there would be no immediate follow-up, but another set of encounters that academic year would have devastating consequences for one young woman. In the fall of 1978, Yoder recruited "Elena," a new student at A.M.B.S., to respond to an article he had written on sexuality in Christian contexts. She had recently completed a service term with Mennonite Central Committee and wanted to explore entering the ministry. In her first semester she took Yoder's "War, Peace, and Revolution" class. During a personal conversation, Yoder commented on her appearance in a way that left her confused. Soon her meetings with Yoder mutated from typical professor-student contacts to one-on-one tutorials, in which he demonstrated his theology of Christian relationships through touch and verbal persuasion. Having grown up in a family that had strictures against talking back, she felt overwhelmed by Yoder, who periodically abused her in his office, in a prayer room, and in her campus living quarters. These encounters were followed by letters in which she repeatedly wrote, "This doesn't make sense!" He replied with a barrage of notes and letters delivered to her student mailbox, explaining exactly how she was wrong in her thinking.[86]

Elena became aware of two additional students and another seminary-affiliated woman who were also part of Yoder's "sister community."[87] She later recalled that he wanted to instruct her both physically and intellectually, and remembered that "he would defeat me every time" she tried to dispute his sexualized ministrations. She tried to gain some perspective by talking with another young woman who was one of the "sisters" and found mirrored confusion: "In the community of

85. Swartley interview with author, June 2, 2014; Ted Koontz, "John H. Yoder and AMBS: A Chronology," Feb. 6, 2012, in author's possession. Swartley had been a student of Yoder's in 1960-1962; see Swartley, *Send Forth Your Light* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2007), 290, n. 42.

86. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author.

87. Ibid.

sisters, we didn't understand—why is he touching our breasts?"[88] Despite professing that what he was doing was "familial" and "non-erotic," Yoder engaged with Elena in a brief act of genital penetration, ostensibly to show her that intimate relations did not have to be coercive, that "men don't have to be rapists."[89]

Elena suffered a loss of self-confidence and whatever sense of sexual boundary maintenance she might have had before arriving at the seminary. In desperation she spoke again with one of the "sisters," a woman who Yoder had suggested might participate with him and Elena in a three-way meeting. Elena and her co-student contemplated Yoder's proposition but then told each other that *he* was wrong, that *his idea*s were wrong, and their rebuff ended Yoder's physical contact with them.[90]

But there would be a long and twisted coda. In the late spring of 1979, Yoder was preparing to leave for Europe, and he asked Elena to record in writing everything he had taught her about Christian sexual relationships. She complied and mailed it to him. Within weeks, Yoder's wife, Anne, discovered Elena's letter and took it to Marlin Miller as further evidence of her husband's extracurricular activities. That summer, the G.B.S. president called Elena into his office. In shock and shame, she stood as Miller showed her the letter she had written, and she listened in disbelief as he told her: "I have the authority to expel you from the seminary."[91] She nodded, and after leaving Miller's office, sank into depression.

Miller, the theologian at the helm of her church's seminary, had threatened her with expulsion. That had been his response to written evidence that Yoder was engaged in explicit sexual experimentation with selected students; the letter she had written and sent to Yoder at his request, just weeks before, had been clear on those details. Elena stayed on campus for the upcoming school year, even sitting in on a class offered by President Miller. But ultimately, she later recalled: "He didn't

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid. In the 1970s, the brief act noted here would not have been considered rape by prevailing legal definitions. Understandings of rape have evolved significantly, however, as have considerations about power inequalities, particularly in religious institutions. Writing in 1990, for example, G. Lloyd Rediger, a Presbyterian pastoral counselor and consultant on sexual abuse, noted: "Consent to sexual relations with unwanted partners . . . does not eliminate the fact of rape, it demonstrates how poorly our society has understood the needs and rights of women."—*Ministry and Sexuality*, 65. For a discussion of how definitions of rape are evolving, see Michael Kimmel and Gloria Steinem, "'Yes' is Better Than 'No'," The *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 2014, A-23.

90. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author.

91. Ibid.

have to expel me. I did his job for him."[92] Concentrating on studies was difficult, and she dropped out of one class after another. She departed Elkhart at the end of her second year without a degree. Her sojourn at the Mennonite seminary had been darkened by Yoder's abuse, by Miller's blaming, and by her own shattered sense of self. These experiences, she later recalled, set her up for further abuse by several other male predators who sensed her vulnerability. In the longer term—over the next several decades—this legacy, including debilitating anxiety and depression, foreshortened her vocation in Christian ministry.[93]

Elena's experiences in 1979 highlight not only the egregious behavior of Yoder toward some women on the A.M.B.S. campus, but also the power that Miller was using to enforce others' silence. For the time being, Miller was still focused on Yoder's troubled marriage. This concern dated back to the 1975-1976 academic year when Miller had been appointed seminary president. Shortly before, Anne Yoder had discovered correspondence of her husband's that provided evidence of his sexual involvements with women in the U.S. and abroad. Confronting him, she had also reached out for emotional support from her sister-in-law, Mary Ellen (Yoder) Meyer, her husband's only sibling.

Meyer, a nurse, was well-acquainted with the seminary community through her brother's longstanding faculty status and her own friendships among northern Indiana Mennonites. Initially assuming that her brother's extramarital involvements were consensual, Meyer had encouraged her sister-in-law to talk with President Miller, hoping he might exert influence over John to attend to his marriage. Anne Yoder did appeal to Miller for help. He initially conceived of the Yoders' problems as "domestic" and private, and he responded discreetly. By 1976, both Miller and Meyer were trying to persuade Yoder how hurtful his behavior was to his wife and, potentially, to others.[94] But despite several years of on-again, off-again four-way conversations between the Yoders, President Miller, and Mary Ellen Meyer, as well as marital counseling by a local psychiatric social worker, Yoder's sexualized behaviors toward many women not only continued, but intensified.[95]

As part of Miller's fraternal efforts to work alongside members of the Yoder family in dealing with Yoder's behavior, he relied for counsel on

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Mary Ellen Meyer interview with author, July 24, 2014.

95. Marlin Miller memo to John Howard Yoder, "Correspondence Issues," Dec. 5, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; John Howard Yoder memo to Marlin Miller, "Apologies and Gratitude," Dec. 7, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder's brother-in-law, Albert Meyer, married to Mary Ellen. Miller and Meyer were close friends. Meyer served as head of the Mennonite Board of Education, which had oversight of G.B.S. and other Mennonite-affiliated schools, and he attended the seminary's board meetings. For eight years, from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, Miller nevertheless shielded the G.B.S. board from awareness of Yoder's sexual behaviors. It remained a family matter.

Meanwhile, as Mary Ellen Meyer learned about her brother's network of "sisters" and details about some of his physical involvements, her distress and apprehension deepened. Arguing with him, rejecting his theological and intellectual premises, she concluded that his seduction of some women, and actions that included all-night experiences of nudity and bodily contact, were grievous distortions of Christianity. She learned, both firsthand and through information shared by Marlin Miller, how Yoder had tried to enlist women for his project and that a number of them had refused. In 1979 she wrote: "I am surprised at his naivety that seemed not to realize this could not all be kept secret forever."[96] "As this comes out," she added regretfully, his insistence on framing his behavior as cutting-edge Christian sexual ethics would undermine much of his theological legacy.[97] She lost heart in the project of reforming her theologian brother, and pulled back from what she had come to regard as a deceptive discourse. By 1980, she had concluded that Yoder's "experiment" was no experiment; he had not incorporated any men into his study, and the harm to many people was all too apparent. She had not succeeded in convincing her brother of this, but for nearly four more years, Marlin Miller would remain at the task.[98]

Miller had hoped that Mary Ellen Meyer would help him correspond with some of the women with whom Yoder had had "intimate relations . . . in the last several years." The seminary president envisioned sending his own letters to the women criticizing Yoder's ideas and practices regarding Christian sexuality. Miller anticipated sending these, along with letters written by Yoder and his wife, expressing Yoder's intent to work with each woman toward "mutual correction, forgiveness, and eventual reconciliation."[99] But this plan never materialized.

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96. Mary Ellen Meyer, typescript correspondence, 1979, in her possession.

97. Ibid.

98. Mary Ellen Meyer, handwritten correspondence, Feb. 27, 1980, in her possession.

99. Quotations from Marlin Miller to John Yoder, Anne Yoder, and Mary Ellen Meyer, Sept. 28, 1979, AMBS Marlin-Miller-John Howard Yoder Files; see also John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, "Proposed Circle Letter to Sisters," Oct. 1, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Marlin Miller memo to John Howard Yoder, "Correspondence Issues," Dec. 5, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder questioned whether Miller's letter-writing scheme was intended to goad each Christian "sister" to apologize for the sin of participating in an adulterous relationship.[100] Yoder rejected the notion that he had engaged in adultery because he regarded his personalized attention to women as therapeutic. Genital penetration without ejaculation, by Yoder's definition, was not sexual intercourse. He regarded as permissible the activities that he called "familial" or "familiar" activity with Christian "sisters," and he defined monogamy as simply remaining married to one's spouse.[101] Further, Yoder pointed out problems likely to emerge from Miller's letter-writing; divulging the women's names, Yoder advised, would violate confidentiality.[102] Besides, did Miller really intend, Yoder asked, "to inform the sisters on the less involved levels that my views led me farther with others than with them?"[103] The seminary president ought not to play one correspondent off against another, Yoder intimated. Yet of his numerous objections, each was subordinate to one key point. You "demand," he chided Miller, "that I bow to the majority view and that it comes from the heart."[104] On the matter of mapping a new Christian sexual ethics, Yoder was not conceding.

Into the 1980s, Miller was determined to keep word of his dispute with Yoder from spreading. Exchanging lengthy memos with his colleague about sexual mores in biblical and contemporary times—in addition to investigating Yoder's specific behaviors—was time-consuming and emotionally draining.[105] Still, Miller considered his adversary his mentor, and he regarded Yoder's theological contributions on nonviolence and discipleship to be of incalculable value. Convincing Yoder of his errors had become the hidden agenda of Miller's seminary presidency.

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100. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Nov. 3, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Nov. 21, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

101. Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author; Marcus Smucker interview with author, July 7, 2014. On Yoder's standard for monogamy, see "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John H. Yoder, March 14, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

102. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Oct. 1, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

103. Yoder to Miller, Nov. 3, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

104. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Oct. 30, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

105. Some of Miller's time investment involved research, including discussing theological and psychological currents with Mennonite seminarians and with psychiatrists. Marlin Miller, typescript to John Howard Yoder, Aug. 13, 1979, twelve pages, copy in the author's possession, provided by Mary Ellen Meyer, p. 10.

Miller had a range of concerns in keeping Yoder's secret. Given the strains in the Yoders' marriage, it was possible that Anne Yoder would become so angry that she would expose her husband's behaviors to the broader church. It was also conceivable that some woman, known or unknown to Miller, might tell her story publicly. Yet another risk lay in exposure by aggrieved husbands. By 1979, Miller had become aware of marriages in trouble because of Yoder's actions in North America and on other continents; a prominent theologian had written to inform Miller of two women in South Africa whom Yoder had violated sexually.[106] And it was unclear to Miller how discreet Yoder himself would be, for, while he had not published or spoken publicly about his views on marriage, singleness, or Christian sexuality, it was possible he still might.[107] In his ongoing communications with Miller, Yoder appeared as interested in perpetuating the process of theological debate as pushing toward any resolution. "You yourself," he lectured Miller, "would not be satisfied with my simply yielding and saying 'have it your way' without valid process."[108]

Taking these variables into account, Miller addressed Yoder's prerogatives seriously and systematically. In March 1979 he asked Yoder to "cease all touch in counseling women" and to adopt an open-door office policy at the seminary.[109] Miller also initiated conversations with former students about Yoder, inquiring about his behavior toward them. Meanwhile, Miller and Yoder agreed that they wished to avoid "potential for blackmail, for scandal."[110] They discussed the merits of what Yoder termed "liquidating your secret file" of correspondence, both unsolicited letters and those resulting from Miller's investigations.[111]

Miller did destroy an unknown number of letters in 1980, but not before hand-transcribing a catalog of what he had learned from seminary alumnae and from women living at a distance. He summarized and dated letters and calls he had received—mostly from English-speakers, but also some in German and French—about women's encounters with

106. Heggen email to the author, Aug. 3, 2014.

107. John Howard Yoder memo to Marlin Miller, Dec. 31, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

108. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Dec. 6, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

109. "Understandings Re: Behavioral Commitments," typescript, c. 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

110. Quotation from Yoder in memo to Miller, Dec. 31, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

111. Quotation from Yoder in memo to Miller, Oct. 23, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Yoder. Miller's diary-like entries included details in the margins about his informants' marital status and whether they had reported "total disrobing" or "partial penetration," as well as their rationales for engaging with Yoder in his theological project.[112] Miller kept this compendium at home, not in his seminary office.[113]

Remarkably, Miller developed no plan to dismiss Yoder. Instead, he used the data he had gathered to repudiate his colleague's theology. In a twelve-page letter, formulated with a preamble and four sections, Miller told Yoder he was responding "primarily in the context of fraternal discernment and debate rather [than] employer-employee negotiations."[114] Extending his critique to all of Yoder's unpublished papers on Christian sexuality, Miller declared:

> I am convinced that your definitional and structural considerations are sufficiently skewed to allow for principles and practices which are less than biblical, undermine Christian marriage, and allow for a measure of marital infidelity short of physical adultery understood narrowly as sexual intercourse.[115]

Yoder's arguments about helping women had, conversely, produced pain. "[Y]our practice in the last several years," Miller argued, "has caused major offense . . . and in every case that I know about caused confusion, guilt, and crises."[116]

Further, Miller refuted Yoder's justifications head-on, objecting to Yoder's "implied analogy between Jesus' conduct" and Yoder's own.[117] He dismissed Yoder's notion that "all the 'traditional taboos' about degrees of familiarity between sexes can be classified . . . as defenses against the perception of sexuality as a wild beast."[118] Miller identified the two locales where he believed Yoder's sexual experimentation to have been most devastating—in Strasbourg, France, the urban headquarters for Mennonite World Conference, and at A.M.B.S. in Elkhart—and he lambasted Yoder for "acting out your ideas in the context of private twosomes rather than giving at least equal energy and

112. Marlin Miller, "notes from correspondence which has been destroyed," handwritten, 22 pages, c. 1980.—AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

113. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, March 31, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

114. Miller, typescript to Yoder, Aug. 13, 1979, p. 1, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

115. Ibid., 5.

116. Ibid., 8-9.

117. Ibid., 9.

118. Ibid.

creativity to developing . . . appropriate community structures." Miller clinched his argument:

> You have thus made yourself in fact legislator, judge, and pope in your own case where the church's discernment of your gifts, your professional expertise, and experience have least prepared you. . . . you are caught in a web of self-rationalization.[119]

Miller's argumentation was sharp; Yoder's rebuttal, dismissive. The two men's intellectual fracas would spin on, propelled by Miller's dogged resolve and Yoder's persistence. Meanwhile, these exchanges enabled the continued abuse of women who were living and studying on the seminary campus but were not privy to the men's debate. Responding to Miller, Yoder reminded his employer of the high calling of Christian ethicists:

> Intellectually the great challenge—is how to deal with a basic challenge to an entire cultural mind set. . . . Numerous of your [arguments] represent simply an appeal to the consensus of our respectable culture. I know what that consensus teaches, for I am its product and its victim. I knew its teachings before I began testing an alternative set of axioms. I did not come to reject them through simple rebellion or disdainful superiority. I knew at the outset that I am "voted down." Therefore any appeals to that consensus . . . or otherwise documenting its hold on our minds, is at best circular, and at worst it supports my analysis.[120]

In this exchange, Yoder posited himself as society's "product and its victim," struggling against banality in the very Christian community that pegged him as spokesman and exemplar.

In the spring of 1980, Yoder drew up a seven-page draft aimed at persuading Miller that his ideas were morally justifiable. In this document he provided a defense that he would offer repeatedly to Mennonite interlocutors, that whenever "women declined further relationship, I . . . respected that."[121] He defended what he called "the essence of the experimental method," noting that "there are experiences of being 'wrong' which clarify that one is also somewhat right."[122] Responding to charges that women had been hurt, not helped, by his sexual explorations, Yoder reached for analogy from medical ethics: "Only by the surgeon's risking some failures, can it be determined for

119. Ibid., 9-10.

120. Yoder to Miller, Dec. 31, 1979, 1.

121. John Howard Yoder, handwritten draft, 7 pages, Spring 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

122. Ibid.

which kinds of patients heart surgery or organ transplant is a risk worth running."[123] Turning to questions about his motives, he retorted:

> Was I driven by an obsession? Was I seeking to hurt my family? Did I coerce persons or bowl over resistance? On this . . . no confirming testimony has come in. The "obsession" interpretation has been weakened by my surviving a year of privation and punishment.[124]

Yoder was referring to "discipline" by the G.B.S. president, including the admonition to keep his office door open whenever female students were present and to stop initiating new "sisters" into his sexual ethics project.

As Miller negotiated a new employment contract with Yoder in 1980, he added several stipulations. First, Yoder was to refrain from the explicitly sexual activities that his December 1979 "'defanging' of the 'beast'" memo had identified. These prohibitions were in effect "world-wide and at all times," not just on the seminary campus, because, Miller told Yoder, he was a representative of A.M.B.S. wherever and whenever he traveled.[125] Further, Yoder was to inform Miller whenever he spoke publicly or wrote on sexuality, marriage, and singleness. This would not be bowing to censorship, Miller assured him, but would guarantee "open conversation and debate with seminary colleagues."[126] Miller wanted to make these behavioral restrictions contractual, but Yoder responded by questioning which of multiple "hats" the seminary president was wearing: Employer? Fraternal counselor? Yoder added that he might prefer to change jobs than abide by behavioral conformity.[127]

Throughout his dispute with Miller, Yoder evinced what some clinicians in the emerging field of religious sexual abuse prevention would identify as "the star factor," the internalizing of a theological framework in which a perpetrator comes to regard himself as such an unusually privileged person that he is exempt from moral principles. In these instances, abusers may believe they are called to do noble work and feel justified in making their own rules.[128] While Yoder's arbiter, Miller, sensed this, the star-quality of Yoder's theological influence

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid.

125. Miller told Yoder to refrain from categories "D through H."—Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, March 31, 1980; see also revised memo, April 26, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

126. Ibid., March 31, 1980.

127. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Jan. 25, 1980, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

128. Rediger, *Ministry and Sexuality*, 17.

blinded as much as it illuminated. And biblicism was still Miller's main frame for addressing Yoder.

In seeking to restrict Yoder's behaviors both on and off the seminary campus, Miller was now acknowledging that reliance on Matthew 18:15 for confronting his brother had been inadequate. The next step, the sixteenth verse of Matthew 18, beckoned: "*But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses*."[129] So, as a new decade began, President Miller assembled a small group of seminary advisors to join him in addressing the problem.

A Covenant Made and Broken

By mutual agreement, in the fall of 1980 Miller and Yoder broadened their disputation to include two G.B.S. board members—board chair Marcus Smucker, a pastor, and Evelyn Shellenberger, a nurse practitioner—as well as a seminary colleague and Old Testament scholar, Millard Lind. Together with Miller and Yoder they met semi-regularly for three years in an effort to apply Matthew 18:16.[130] In October 1980, Miller drafted a three-page "Covenantal Agreement" between himself, Yoder, Smucker, Shellenberger, and Lind. This document affirmed Yoder's continued employment at G.B.S. and noted that no punitive measures would be applied. However, the covenant required Yoder to initiate steps toward healing and reconciliation wherever his actions had caused injury.[131] Covenant members agreed to not speak of this to others and regarded their agreement as the "successful conclusion of the second step of the Matthew 18 'rule of Christ' process, namely the step of the brother's having heard the two or three witnesses."[132] In authoring the document, Miller applied Matthew 18:16 to the group's promise of confidentiality, which he believed would serve seminary interests. "The matter therefore," he wrote, "is not 'told to the church.'"[133] Miller was invoking biblical justification for withholding from G.B.S.'s board of

129. Mt. 18:16, RSV.

130. By 1982, the Covenant Group had limited its meetings to annual gatherings, in which members reevaluated and renewed their commitment to the covenant. Marlin Miller, "Summary of Agenda and Agreements: Covenant Group Meeting," Aug. 21, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

131. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Millard Lind, Marcus Smucker, and John Howard Yoder, Oct. 25, 1981, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

132. "Covenantal Agreement," Oct. 22, 1980, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

133. Ibid.

overseers information about Yoder's past, as well as the new conditions put in place.

Three members of the Covenant Group—Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind—were disinclined to challenge Yoder's unorthodox views of sexuality. When the group met, they listened as Miller and Yoder debated, and Smucker later remembered that Miller did not divulge his own detailed knowledge about A.M.B.S. students and other women who had been harmed by Yoder. Decades later, Smucker expressed regret that, as G.B.S. board chair in the early 1980s and as a member of the Covenant Group, he had not been more proactive: "I trusted Marlin, but his judgment failed. And the issue of confidentiality was very vigorously pushed by John."[134] At Covenant Group meetings, Yoder claimed that as an ethicist he was at the forefront of a sexual desensitization endeavor deserving wider testing. "Crazy as *I* thought it was," Smucker recalled, "I thought *he* [Yoder] believed it," and gradually Smucker realized that the two theologians' dispute had been long in the making.[135] Only dimly did he grasp the stakes for women—students, spouses, secretaries, and others—at the seminary.

For a brief time, in the spring of 1982, the Covenant Group ceded the question of whether Yoder's ideas merited further testing to a new set of listeners. Miller and Yoder agreed on a short list of names of Mennonite men and women from the Elkhart community and invited these persons to serve on a "Confidential Task Force." Over six meetings in a small seminary classroom, Yoder stood at the blackboard, diagramming, instructing, and inviting his listeners to consider how married, single, and divorced Christians might benefit from a new "familial" ethics that rejected contemporary thinking—as summarized by Yoder—of sexuality as "a beast or a slippery slope which is intrinsically wild, uncontrollable."[136] Yoder told the task force that he envisioned some Christians to be ready for a new paradigm modeled on "the way Jesus dealt with women."[137] According to ground rules set by Yoder and Miller, the task force was to consider only theoretical perspectives, not actual experience. Thus Yoder never referenced his experimentation with "sisters." Sitting in on these seminars were a local psychiatrist and an elder from the intentional community Fellowship of Hope, as well as President Miller, who for the time being held back his critique. The exercise was inconsequential. As the school year ended, the task force

134. Marcus Smucker interview with author, July 7, 2014.

135. Ibid.

136. "Summary of Ad Hoc Consultation," March 17, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

137. Ibid.

disbanded, with one member advising Yoder to abandon his theoretical agenda and work on strengthening his marriage.[138]

Through the early 1980s, Miller's reliance on the covenant to police Yoder's behavior introduced a set of new difficulties. The first and most pressing was how to carry out the promise of confidentiality. Miller and others of the Covenant Group faced mounting questions by seminary constituents and church leaders from throughout the denomination and beyond. As new understandings about sexual harassment and abuse gained currency across Mennonite institutions, Miller's covenantal protections of Yoder functioned as a relic from an earlier era.

The second problem arose from the biblical mandate that one who offends should take steps toward healing and reconciliation. Members of the Covenant Group anticipated that this would require conversations between Yoder and others. When Miller, in an effort to jump-start this process, contacted individuals whom he knew to have been violated, he discovered that they were unwilling to participate. The seminary's interest in arranging reconciliatory meetings for its own peace theologian ran afoul of the women's interests. What victim of sexual abuse wished for face-to-face contact with Yoder, either alone or in the presence of his institutional backers? Miller turned up no one—not seminary employees, alumnae, or acquaintances in the broader community—and eventually he conceded that "they are afraid of unpleasant or harmful consequences, either from John or from broader damage to their reputations."[139]

Yoder turned this to his advantage, intimating to Miller that the covenant was not living up to its promises. How could he apologize to accusers in the shadows? Yoder did not deny his history of sexualized relationships with women, but maintained that he had never intended harm. Why, he asked, should he remain under disciplinary restrictions if there was no one available to hear that he regretted having misinterpreted some women's cues about their willingness? Oddly, Yoder phrased his episodic misreading of women's readiness to give consent as "falling off the bike"—that is, something that was regrettable but unintentional.[140] "In terms of the reconciliation mandate of Matt. 18,"

138. Judy Harder to John Howard Yoder, May 2, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller, "Summary of Agenda and Agreements, Covenant Group Meeting," Aug. 21, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001

139. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Marlin Miller to Victor Stoltzfus, March 20, 1991, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

140. Shellenberger interview with author; Ted Koontz, "John H. Yoder and AMBS: A Chronology," 6.

Yoder insisted, "we cannot proceed in the absence of accusers."[141] It was a conundrum that, for years, provided the centerpiece of his arguments with Miller.

A third problem proved equally intractable. Yoder had agreed to refrain from a litany of sexual activities that, over the better part of a decade, had become a principal mode for interacting with women. As a member of the Covenant Group, he was not supposed to falter. But the restrictions proved burdensome, and Yoder complained that, as a part-time faculty member at Goshen Biblical Seminary, "it is not clear that I should be 100% under GBS' moral control."[142] Meanwhile, when Miller tried to question Yoder about new accusations that came his way, Yoder insisted that he was simply corresponding with "sisters" from the past who welcomed his attention.[143] Miller's files on his colleague again grew thick with correspondence, chiefly complaints about Yoder's behavior.[144] One acquaintance alerted Miller to rumors that Yoder "does in fact, by his example, encourage extra-marital affairs as a way of life" and told the G.B.S. president pointedly that "if you don't condone them, you'll have to address them, because the constituency reads silence on the issues as consent."[145]

In the midst of this flow of letters came a singular one laying charges of sexual harassment directly on Miller's desk. Ruth Krall, a former student at A.M.B.S. and clinical counselor who had taught at Goshen College, wrote to Miller of her growing awareness from the late 1970s onward of the "serious problem" at the seminary and of Miller's continuing difficulties in stopping Yoder's behavior. Although Krall had not experienced sexual harassment personally, as a clinician she had heard painful accounts about Yoder's abuses. For several years she and colleagues from Goshen College had been in conversation with faculty women at nearby campuses—the University of Notre Dame and St.

141. John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, Evelyn Shellenberger, Millard Lind, Marcus Smucker, Dec. 8, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Yoder to Miller, Shellenberger, Lind, Smucker, Dec. 19, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

142. John Howard Yoder memo to "concerned sisters," Oct. 21, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

143. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, handwritten letter, April 10, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

144. See, for example, correspondence to Marlin Miller, Nov. 10, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

145. Correspondence to Marlin Miller, Aug. 22, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

Mary's College—to share concerns about Yoder's unwelcome sexual advances and to strategize about confronting the problem.[146]

Krall's critique, leveled in 1982, was broader than the perspectives Miller had considered previously. The trouble was not simply one faculty member's behavior. Krall framed the problem as institutional, exacerbated by a male-dominated board, administration, teaching staff, and student body. At the seminary, male prerogative was simply taken for granted. Krall told Miller bluntly: "Until the agenda of sexism is taken seriously, you may not ever hear the story of sexual harassment. Sexism and sexual violence against women are so intertwined at this moment in history that it is impossible to separate them."[147] The persistence of institutionalized sexism aided and abetted sexual harassment, which had destructive implications, she added:

> When women, in any way, are considered to be subordinate, inferior, or the sexual property of men, sexual harassment can occur. As such is it an act of violence against women. It is a most devastating method of putting women in their place. Because our sexuality and its enactment is so vital to our identity, any exploitation by the powerful towards the less powerful reverberates one thousand fold.[148]

For Miller, Krall's letter raised the stakes. Yoder was now disregarding parts of the covenantal agreement, and his actions threatened to wreak havoc on the seminary's reputation. New revelations of sexual violations, fast as they were coming in, could not be controlled.

Although Miller failed to absorb Krall's feminist perspective that sexual harassment constituted violence against women, he could not miss the signs that Mennonite women academics were concerned about female students' and other women's safety. They had interpreted the problem in a new way, and their solutions were far different from Miller's. Krall and other women were mobilizing against patriarchy by intensifying communications. Miller soon learned the truth of Krall's parting challenge, that "the women's network in the Mennonite Church knows more about this problem than you do." At the next general assembly of the Mennonite Church, a convention held in August 1983 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, women gathered privately to discuss Yoder's behavior and the Elkhart seminary's condoning of it. Some approached

146. Ruth E. Krall to Marlin Miller, Sept. 9, 1982, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Krall, *The Elephants in God's Living Room*, Vol. 3, 2014, http://ruthkrall.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-Elephants-in-God%E2%80%99s-Living-Room-Vol-3-%C2%A9.pdf; Ruth Krall, email to author, July 29, 2014.

147. Krall to Miller, Sept. 9, 1982.

148. Ibid.

church administrators to report what they knew and urged intervention, calling for restrictions on Yoder's movements around the seminary, at college campuses, and at other institutions.[149]

Prodded by their advocacy, Miller made further inquiries and heard from two young women at the University of Notre Dame who had suffered abuse by Yoder in his South Bend office and elsewhere on the campus. One of the women had reported Yoder's behavior to a counselor in the student services office at Notre Dame; with several other women, she had contemplated a lawsuit against Yoder. Although the Notre Dame students had not pursued legal action, their detailed accounts of Yoder's abuse—along with escalating reports from Mennonite constituents and the possibility that other aggrieved women might bring a lawsuit against the seminary—convinced Miller that the covenant with Yoder was broken.[150] From Miller's perspective, the time had come to apply the full freight of the Matthew 18 passage, verse seventeen: "*If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church . . . .*"[151]

Seminary Resignation

During the fall of 1983, Miller and members of the Covenant Group prepared to recommend Yoder's dismissal to the G.B.S. board of overseers, which Miller envisioned as the third and final step of Matthew 18, although "tell it to the church," in this case, meant sharing confidential information with male-dominated seminary boards. Miller's counterpart at A.M.B.S., Mennonite Biblical Seminary president Henry Poettcker, had recently heard from constituents about Yoder's sexual misconduct, and it was only a matter of time before M.B.S.'s board of trustees would learn of these developments. Yoder reacted sharply. He wrote to women friends that the Covenant Group was now placing him under new limitations, including no further touching of any women outside his own family. These and other "sweeping legalistic restrictions," Yoder added, were due to complaints by unknown accusers, as well as gossip in "'women's movement' circles in which my

149. Ibid.; Miller to Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. The 1983 convention in Bethlehem was a joint gathering of the Mennonite Church, with which Goshen Biblical Seminary was affiliated, and the General Conference Mennonite Church, with which Mennonite Biblical Seminary was affiliated.

150. Miller to Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, p. 3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, Dec. 19, 1983; AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Gordon Dyck, notes of meeting of representatives from AMBS, Prairie Street Mennonite Church, and Church Life Commission, Dec. 18, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

151. Mt. 18:17, RSV.

relationships with certain persons are interpreted as harassment."[152] Yoder decried the seminary's tilt against his continued employment; he could not, he said, respond to the accuracy of charges without knowing who had made them. In his estimation, the seminary had flouted due process and violated the letter and spirit of Matthew 18. "How much blood," he demanded to know, "do my unnamed accusers want?"[153]

Through the remainder of the academic year, tensions between Miller and Yoder escalated, with Miller concluding that Yoder's continued pursuit of proscribed activities in the past few years had not abated, "depending on how one defines intercourse."[154] Yoder told Miller that he had no reason to change his ideas about sexual ethics.[155] But as seminary leaders considered their options for terminating him, Yoder began to speak of resigning and negotiating a severance.[156]

By late 1983, Yoder was arranging for a leave of absence from Notre Dame for the upcoming academic year. His status as a full-time professor there meant, in practical terms, that the Elkhart seminary would be losing an adjunct faculty member. However, no one would regard his departure from G.B.S. as routine, so both Yoder and Miller turned their attention to administrative details: When should Yoder leave? What should the seminary board and other constituents be told? How should the department head of theological studies at Notre Dame be informed? What should be shared with Mennonite agencies? What of the women who were asking questions about A.M.B.S.'s and Notre Dame's policies? On these matters, Yoder drafted proposals that in his view represented a "'political compromise' to . . . reduce the damages."[157]

Negotiations and compromise would not come easily, however. Yoder continued to insist that due process had been violated, and he told Miller and members of the Covenant Group—by now, functioning as a seminary committee to work out his severance—that by resigning he

152. Quotations from Yoder memo to Marlin Miller, Evelyn Shellenberger, and Marcus Smucker, Dec. 17, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Yoder memo to "concerned sisters," Oct. 21, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

153. Quotation from Yoder memo to Miller, Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind, Dec. 8, 1983; see also Yoder to Miller, Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind, Dec. 17, 1983.

154. Miller to Shellenberger, Jan. 3, 1984, p. 3.

155. Ibid.

156. Marlin Miller, "Draft for Brainstorming," ca. Oct. 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

157. Yoder to Miller, Shellenberger, Smucker, and Lind, Dec. 17, 1983, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

was doing the seminary a favor to "help us all out of a bind."[158] Marcus Smucker, who had left G.B.S.'s board chairmanship to join the seminary faculty, took exception to Yoder's portrayal of himself as a victim of injustice. Smucker expressed chagrin that he and others had waited so long to act decisively against Yoder. "In particular," Smucker told him, "Marlin has invested heavily with his time, energy, and personal anguish to try to make this work out in your behalf. Somehow his concern and interest for your welfare seems to have escaped your awareness, instead you appear to be translating this into primarily an authority issue."[159]

With these conflicts simmering, neither Yoder nor Miller relied on legal counsel. Arrangements for Yoder's separation were handled in-house, based on written agreements made early in 1984. Yoder informed the chair of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame, Richard McBrien, that he would be leaving his adjunct position at Goshen Biblical Seminary and that the decision had "delicate dimensions." Yoder added: "I and the others in the Mennonite context would be grateful if you could avoid giving the matter unnecessary prominence."[160] McBrien complied, and Miller—mindful of recent reports from current and former Notre Dame students as well as a staff counselor—warned Yoder that "some [women] there talk among themselves and tell others to 'look out for some of the priests and Prof. Y.'"[161] Assuming that his own administrative problems would abate once Yoder left the seminary, Miller cautioned him not to jeopardize his employment at Notre Dame.[162]

Yoder resigned effective June 1, 1984, and no publicity attended G.B.S.'s board action to accept the resignation. If asked about it, G.B.S. board members and seminary representatives were to say that the decision had been reached by mutual agreement as a solution to

158. See, for example, John Howard Yoder to Marlin Miller, March 26, 1984, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and John Howard Yoder to Marcus Smucker and Marlin Miller, April 13, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

159. Quotation from Marcus Smucker to John Howard Yoder, ca. Jan. 12, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; see also Marcus Smucker to Marlin Miller, John Howard Yoder, Evelyn Shellenberger, and Millard Lind, April 5, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

160. John Howard Yoder to Richard McBrien, Feb. 6, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

161. Quotation from Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, Feb. 3, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

162. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, Feb. 2, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. See also Marlin Miller to Richard McBrien, June 14, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

longstanding issues, and that neither the institution nor Yoder planned to make a statement.[163] Signaling silence in a pact with Yoder that he would later regret, Miller stipulated that "GBS will not take the initiative to inform responsible persons in the church or in church agencies if not asked."[164] If representatives of church agencies *did* ask for explanations, Miller planned to confer with G.B.S.'s board chair—a post held by Evelyn Shellenberger—and with Yoder. When, in late spring 1984, the G.B.S./M.B.S. boards met in joint executive session, Miller announced that Yoder was resigning in acknowledgement of sexual involvements with women on several continents. A G.B.S. board member asked what Yoder thought he had been accomplishing through his activities, and Miller replied: "He was trying to prove you could 'tame the beast.'"[165] Miller asked the assembled group of nearly twenty board members to keep the reason for Yoder's forced resignation confidential, a request that drew sharp responses. Some M.B.S. board members were critical of Miller for withholding the damaging information for so long.[166] How should Mennonite Church- and General Conference-related agencies deal with upcoming speaking engagements by Yoder that were already planned? Maintaining confidentiality seemed impossible, and, to some, ill-advised. But in the coming years, seminary insiders would remain mostly mum.[167]

Yoder's departure was not a clean break. As a former faculty member who lived across the street from the seminary, he retained a key and campus mailbox, an arrangement that was to be reviewed periodically.[168] He also continued to use the seminary library. These logistics became conflictual as word filtered back to Miller that Yoder was telling others that his resignation from the seminary lacked "due process." In 1983, worried about the potential for public scandal, Miller had urged Yoder to decline an invitation to speak at the eleventh Mennonite World

163. For an example, see Ron Rempel to Marlin Miller, Oct. 30, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Marlin Miller to Ron Rempel, Nov. 15, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

164. Quotation from Marlin Miller, et. al., "Subcommittee Report and Recommendations" to GBS Board of Overseers, Jan. 18, 1984, pp. 3-4, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. On Miller's later regret, see Ted Koontz interview with author, June 6, 2014.

165. Larry Eby email communication, Aug. 4, 2014.

166. Ibid.

167. Soon after the joint meeting, Yoder expressed dismay to Miller that not all M.B.S. board members had kept details of the session confidential.—Yoder to Miller, July 14, 1984, AMBS Evelyn Shellenberger Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-003, Mennonite Church USA Archives–Goshen.

168. Marlin Miller to Joe Hertzler, June 29, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Richard A. Kauffman to Evelyn Shellenberger, Dec. 8, 1986, AMBS Evelyn Shellenberger Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-003.

Conference assembly in Strasbourg, France. It would be an enormous gathering, with thousands of people attending from seventy nations. But from Miller's point of view, too many people on both sides of the Atlantic were aware of Yoder's sexual behaviors.[169] Yoder had acquiesced, but his subsequent comments to others about a lack of fairness associated with his seminary resignation reflected his irritation with Miller, and Yoder's wrangling over the next several years for access to seminary resources echoed this dissatisfaction.[170] Gradually, however, seminary ties loosened. In the coming years, Yoder, whose profile as theologian and ethicist would grow with his base at the University of Notre Dame, would not be welcome at any A.M.B.S. event.

A Church Member in Good Standing?

After Yoder's departure, Miller, when asked why he had left, hewed to the line about the separation having been a way to resolve longstanding issues. From interested parties both within and beyond the Mennonite Church, he fielded queries that often reflected sympathy for Yoder. "Where is the grace in all this?" asked one friend. Usually circumspect, Miller replied with details that few others would learn: his communications regarding sexual violations by Yoder had involved approximately thirty individuals "in Africa, Canada, Europe, and the United States, and . . . comparable situations in South America." He and his colleagues had exercised exceeding patience with Yoder, and the toll on his own health and family life had been significant. Given these challenges, Miller mused that it had been necessary for Yoder to sever his ties with the seminary; that he had left was a sign of grace.[171]

Any relief Miller may have felt was short-lived. Mennonite administrators and academics hoping to work with Yoder—but puzzling over whether they ought to—brought a tide of new problems into the president's office. From Kansas, a Mennonite pastor reported that Yoder's plans to teach a class at the Great Plains Seminary Extension was thrown into question because of rumors about his past, and the word from Yoder himself was that "the Matthew 18 process" at the Elkhart

169. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, April 10, 1983 AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. By late spring 1984, the Mennonite Central Committee's Peace Section was also reassessing its relationship with Yoder. See "Review: John Howard Yoder Portfolio," May 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

170. Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, June 4, 1984, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; John Howard Yoder to Joseph Hertzler, July 27, 1987, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to Joseph Hertzler, July 28, 1987, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

171. Quotation from Marlin Miller in letter to correspondent, March 18, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

seminary had broken down.[172] By the mid-1980s, a generation of pastoral leaders had imbibed lessons on church discipline—in the biblical phrase, "binding and loosing"—from Yoder through his widely-disseminated books and lectures.[173] With Yoder now reportedly saying that Christian principles of accountability had been devalued at the seminary, Miller regarded Yoder's word as disingenuous. Miller felt bound, by his written severance agreements with Yoder, to say little in response, but he showed a fellow A.M.B.S. administrator where he kept his Yoder-related files under lock and key, "in case," he said, "my plane ever goes down."[174]

From Herald Press, the Mennonite publishing house headquartered in western Pennsylvania, which had an interest in continuing to publish Yoder's work, came a pointed query: "Has John been involved in adultery?"[175] Posed by the press's editor for theological books, this question fell into the category that Miller had promised Yoder he would address only after consulting with his board chair and Yoder himself. Miller did confer with them and then urged Herald Press to interrogate Yoder directly, suggesting opaquely that the editors ask Yoder "where he now stands on matters the seminary was concerned about and which contributed to his resignation."[176] The issue would not go away. For years, Herald Press would face pressure from readers who questioned whether the Mennonite standard-bearer in publishing should continue to publish Yoder, as well as those who critiqued the press for grappling with that question.[177]

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172. Lois Barrett letter to Marlin Miller, May 28, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

173. Lapp interview, June 24, 2014.

174. Quotation from Richard Kauffman interview with author; see also Marlin Miller to John Howard Yoder, March 13, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. Miller had used the phrase "in case my plane goes down" in referring to his Yoder-related files as early as 1979. See Miller to Yoder, Dec. 26, 1979, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. Miller's reticence to communicate details about Yoder's departure from AMBS was encouraged by legal counsel; see Greg Hartzler to Marlin Miller, March 20, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

175. Loren Johns to Marlin Miller, Sept. 12, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

176. Marlin Miller to Loren Johns, Nov. 18, 1985, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

177. Cf. Loren Johns to Charlie Cooper, Jan. 27, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001, and Millard Lind to Marlin Miller, Jan. 12, 1987, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. For varied perspectives on the press's 2013 decision regarding books authored by Yoder, see "MennoMedia to Include Publishers Statement in John Howard Yoder Books," Dec. 9, 2013, http://www.menno-media.org/?Page=7904, and letter to editor by Walter Klaassen, Ruth Klaassen, Harry Loewen, and Vern Ratzlaff, *Canadian Mennonite*, March 3, 2014, 11-13.

Inquiries to the seminary from Herald Press coincided with rising concerns within Yoder's own congregation, the Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart. Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing for more than a decade, a succession of pastors there—first gingerly, and then more boldly—approached Yoder, responding to information circulating about his extramarital sexual activity. Prior to Yoder's departure from Goshen Biblical Seminary, Prairie Street pastor Phil Bedsworth and a ministerial colleague had spoken with Yoder in an effort to apply Matthew 18. They were concerned about the state of Yoder's marriage, but they did not pursue the matter beyond a few conversations.[178]

In 1986, a newly-arrived pastor at Prairie Street, Charlie Cooper, hosted a series of breakfast meetings with the nine other ordained ministers in the congregation in an effort to build collegial relationships with Yoder and other leaders.[179] (Yoder had been ordained to the ministry in 1973 while serving as president of Goshen Biblical Seminary.) Cooper later remembered: "These men had for the most part known Yoder for years, and several had heard . . . of 'concerns.'"[180] A number were retired pastors; others held posts in Mennonite agencies. At these meetings, Yoder and Cooper discussed the meaning of ordination. It was a topic of significance for Cooper because believers church theology held that the locus for disciplining members, including ordained leaders, was the congregation.[181] Had Mennonites ascribed to a more hierarchical ecclesiology, Prairie Street Mennonite Church would have been less likely to investigate rumors of Yoder's sexual misconduct. But throughout 1986, Cooper and the congregational Board of Elders—a leadership group responsible for spiritual well-being within the congregation—felt obliged to respond to inquiries from Herald Press and to determine whether or not Yoder could remain a church member in good standing.[182]

The elders were frustrated in their efforts to obtain information from Yoder directly. Yoder told Cooper that if they were ready "to go into matters in greater depth, read papers, deal with appropriate definitions

178. James Lapp, handwritten notes, March 27, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; Keith Harder interview with author, July 12, 2014.

179. Simon Gingerich interview with author, June 7, 2014; "Litany for the Service of Ordination of John Howard Yoder," May 6, 1973, AMBS Marlin-Miller John Howard Yoder Files.

180. Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

181. Prairie Street representatives consulted with leaders of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference about the congregation's responsibility for accountability regarding ministers; see Indiana-Michigan Church Life Commission Minutes, April 3, 1986, p. 3, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

182. Loren Johns to Charlie Cooper, Jan. 27, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

and research results," he would be more willing to engage with them.[183] That was a conversation stopper. Decades later, Cooper recalled: "It was difficult to see [Yoder's] life-long friends in elders meeting trying to be helpful and nurturing while pushing him toward honesty, and see them being essentially humiliated as he ran them around in intellectual, ethical, theological circles."[184] When confronted with questions about moral lapses, Yoder neither confirmed nor denied. The Prairie Street elders then turned to Miller for context and clues, but the seminary president would not divulge specific reasons for Yoder's separation from A.M.B.S.[185]

After nearly a year, the Prairie Street elders concluded that, despite continuing concerns about Yoder, they lacked clear evidence of wrongdoing. Hearing this, Herald Press, whose earlier inquiries had suggested that his actions threatened Mennonite propriety, saw no reason to discipline him over unsubstantiated allegations. If the Prairie Street congregation could find no justification for revoking his church membership, then "we cannot but hold him to be completely clear of accusation—a Herald Press author in good standing."[186] At the Elkhart seminary, President Miller was dismayed that the press planned to proceed with publishing Yoder's work when judgments from Yoder's congregational leaders were ambiguous.[187] For their part, the press's editors never considered launching their own inquiry into Yoder's past, but they were perplexed by Miller's reluctance to speak candidly about Yoder's moral character.[188]

Church accountability, it seemed, was a slippery business. In the next decade, as credible accounts of Yoder's sexual abuse emerged and questions arose again about lines of accountability, leaders at A.M.B.S., Herald Press, and Prairie Street Mennonite Church all rethought assumptions about whether a congregation with no access to verifiable information could effectively discipline Mennonites' best-known theologian. Who had failed the church? Who had disappointed women fearful of Yoder's movements in the Elkhart and South Bend

183. Quotation from Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, pp. 2-3, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

184. Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

185. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

186. Quotation from Loren Johns to Charlie Cooper, Dec. 18, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Loren Johns interview with author, June 6, 2014.

187. Marlin Miller to Evelyn Shellenberger, Marcus Smucker, and Millard Lind, Dec. 29, 1986, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

188. Loren Johns interview with author.

communities and beyond? These questions were rhetorical, but Cooper, who left Prairie Street in 1989 for another pastorate, reflected that "the only person not spinning their wheels or convening meetings nor draining their energy nor playing private detective . . . was John Howard Yoder. He seemed very content to wait out the process."[189] It would be nearly five years before Mennonite ecclesiastical bodies would maneuver toward him again.

"No Longer a Private Matter"

In 1989, Yoder sustained injuries in a car accident that resulted in physical limitations for the rest of his life. Lingering foot pain and a reliance on crutches to walk presented mobility challenges for the Notre Dame professor, now over 60 years old; but his productivity remained undiminished. Yoder wrote in five languages, and translators made his works even more accessible. At A.M.B.S. and other institutions around the world, his books on theology and ethics were part of course curricula. But in Elkhart, students speculated about why he no longer taught at the seminary, and some challenged faculty members and administrators to remove Yoder's writings from required reading lists. A few professors had stopped referencing Yoder in the classroom, while others regarded his scholarship as central to their own teaching and research.[190]

In 1990, Ruth and Harold Yoder, a married couple who had recently completed studies at A.M.B.S., began serving as co-pastors at Prairie Street Mennonite Church. Occasionally receiving queries from Mennonite agencies about John Howard Yoder's sexual misconduct, the new pastors were unsure how to respond, but a member of Prairie Street's Board of Elders passed along a file documenting the 1986 confrontations with him. Now, five years later, Mennonite conferences were beginning to implement policies addressing sexual abuse. The Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, which held Yoder's ministerial credential, was on the verge of adopting guidelines for responding to sexual abuse allegations against ordained leaders.[191] Aware of these

189. Cooper, email to author, June 28, 2014.

190. Mary H. Schertz to Marlin Miller, Feb. 19, 1990, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Memo to Marlin Miller, Feb. 19, 1990, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; AMBS Joint Boards Executive Minutes, March 1, 1990, p. 2, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Swartley interview with author.

191. John Esau of the General Conference Mennonite Church had already drafted "Guidelines for Discipline in Ministerial Credentialing." See eighth revision, Jan. 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; "Draft—Guidelines for Dealing with Alleged Sexual Harassment and/or Abuse," Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, May

developments, the Prairie Street pastors and elders opened a new investigation. As with earlier efforts, the Matthew 18 frame for resolving conflict was still in play, but it was now overlaid with concerns about potential for abuse in settings where individuals held unequal power.

Rooted in the Prairie Street congregation, this initiative also included Mennonite leaders whose concerns about Yoder's conduct dated back many years. During 1991-1992, the newly-constituted Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force included representatives of the congregation along with five members from the broader denomination, including James Lapp, general secretary of the Mennonite Church.[192] Lapp had been aware of allegations about Yoder's misconduct and had earlier assumed that adjudication should fall to Goshen Biblical Seminary and to the Prairie Street congregation. But now, perspectives about misuses of religious authority influenced Lapp and other leaders.

Lapp later recalled,

> There was a gap in John's theology and understanding, of not respecting power dynamics. The whole culture was changing about how we viewed abuse of women. It was no longer a private matter; we came to see the inadequacy of that. By the 1990s there was more willingness to take responsibility, and I was prodded along by these voices of women.[193]

Other voices were emerging, as well. John K. Stoner, for example, a pacifist writer and administrator for Mennonite Central Committee, urged Lapp to reject Yoder's interpretations of Matthew 18. Stoner knew individuals familiar with Yoder's sexual aggressions, and argued that confronting him required a new model:

> The first step must be a careful, thorough and sensitive documentation of the stories of all of the women who have a complaint. . . . Totally contrary to what John Howard has maintained, the victims do not have to confront and accuse him face

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18, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files, Elkhart, Ind.; Harold Yoder interview with author, June 7, 2014; Sherm Kauffman interview with author, June 9, 2014.

192. "Charge to JHY Task Force," 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files. Harold Yoder convened the Task Force, which included Prairie Street's Ruth Yoder and Mary Mishler, as well as Atlee Beechy, Phyllis Stutzman, Dale Schumm, Willis Breckbill, and James Lapp.

193. Quotations from Lapp interview with author. See also Lapp to Victor Stoltzfus, April 30, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Lapp, handwritten notes from meeting with Harold Yoder, May 29, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files. Some male Mennonite leaders reported transformational experiences in the early to mid-1990s as a result of participating in conferences focused on stopping male violence against women. See, for example, Ted Koontz, "Born Again," in *Godward*, ed. Ted Koontz (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1996), 17-24.

> to face. In the nature of the case, very few or none of them have the power to do that, and it is beside the point (indeed, perverse) to blame them.[194]

Stoner's critique reflected the work of Christian theorist Marie Fortune, who in *Sexual Violence* and other writings posited that the Matthew passage "assumes a level playing field with all parties equal. This cannot be true when one party is a pastor."[195] As an alternative approach, Stoner's perspective guided the new JHY Task Force, whose members began contacting women to document past offenses.

The task force's initiatives laid the groundwork for an unprecedented confrontation with Yoder. Within the year, his history of abuse would become public knowledge. In the fall of 1991, Mennonite activism aimed at bringing Yoder's sexual misconduct to light coincided with the U.S. Senate confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas. Millions of Americans watched televised accounts of the nominee denying accusations of sexual harassment, and publicity surrounding the hearings stimulated nationwide discussions about sexual behavior in the workplace as well as power inequities.[196] Although Thomas was eventually appointed to the Supreme Court, new attention to claims of sexual harassment gave further weight to the JHY Task Force, which was determined to learn the extent of Yoder's sexual abuse toward women and apply protocols for church-based discipline.

Ministerial Credential Suspended

In 1991, Martha Smith Good was serving as campus pastor at Goshen College. A decade and a half earlier, as a student at G.B.S., she had thwarted Yoder's approaches over a period of several years.[197] Also in 1991, Carolyn Holderread Heggen, a Mennonite mental health professional, was living in New Mexico. Heggen had met Yoder a decade earlier when he had traveled to Albuquerque for a series of speaking engagements; during that trip, and later, through correspondence, he made unwelcome sexual advances to her.[198] Both women had rebuffed Yoder directly and, in due time, had spoken with

194. John K. Stoner to James Lapp, received April 4, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

195. Quotation from Bromley and Cress, "Narratives of Sexual Danger," 148. See also Marie Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, [1983] 2005).

196. "The Clarence Thomas Confirmation Hearings: The Awakening of America to the Issue of Sexual Harassment," in Paul I. Weizer, *Sexual Harassment: Cases, Case Studies, & Commentary* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 147.

197. Good interview with author.

198. Heggen interview with author.

his employer, Marlin Miller, about their experiences.[199] Heggen would pursue a career in mental health, speaking and writing on sexual abuse. By the 1990s, she was in regular contact with Mennonite agencies, raising awareness about violence against women and encouraging networking among survivors of sexual abuse.[200]

Heggen, frustrated by Miller's apparent deference to Yoder, despite reports of ongoing harassment of women, became acquainted with Good in the fall of 1991. The two women's experience of finding each other was significant for their own sense of well-being, and they decided to invite other women to join them, since the Elkhart seminary had not reached out to extend care to Yoder's victims. They took a letter they had written, inviting other women to contact them for mutual support, to Miller, and asked him to mail it to anyone who had contacted him about unwanted sexual approaches by Yoder.[201] They left Miller little choice. When he initially refused, Heggen told him that she had already shared a copy of the letter with J. Lorne Peachey, editor of the Mennonite magazine *The Gospel Herald*. Peachey had earlier told Heggen that if he could use his position to support her work in creating awareness about sexual abuse in Mennonite contexts, he would do so, and he was willing, if necessary, to publish the letter.[202]

After consulting with the seminary's attorney, Miller reluctantly gave the two women the help they sought. Miller had a long record of keeping secrets about Yoder's actions, but times had changed. Secrecy in the matter of ecclesiastical handling of authority and sexual abuse could no longer be maintained, and he now regarded Yoder's history as far more troubling than an injudicious "experiment" in Christian ethics. Miller forwarded Good and Heggen's letter to individuals whose names he had filed away. In a cover note, Miller wrote: "Please give their request your serious consideration. If you choose to respond, you may get in touch with one of them directly.[203] Ironically, as the women's circle

199. During the 1983-1984 academic year, Yoder wrote to Heggen, raising the possibility that he might sue for libel.—Heggen, email to author, June 27, 2014; Charlene Epp to Harold and Ruth Yoder, Sept. 4, 1991, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

200. Heggen interview with author; Carolyn Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993).

201. Ruth Krall, who was acquainted with both Good and Heggen, had suggested that they meet.—Martha Smith Good and Carolyn Holderread Heggen to Marlin Miller and Marcus Smucker, "Unfinished Business re: John Howard Yoder," Oct. 23, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

202. Heggen interview with author. See also Marlin Miller letter to J. Lorne Peachey, Nov. 7, 1990, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

203. Quotation from Marlin Miller, "Draft: Confidential," c. Dec. 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Martha Smith Good and Carolyn Holderread Heggen letter addressed "Dear Sister," 1991, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in

was widening, Miller's supporting role would be hidden from view. Even though secrecy in the matter of Yoder's legacies of abuse was ending, transparency in Mennonite institutions remained elusive; Miller told members of his administrative cabinet that, if queried about Yoder's past employment at the seminary, they should speak in "neutral terms of 'sexual conduct' rather than 'sexual harassment.'" Miller was concerned that loose talk at the seminary might result in a libel suit.[204]

The women's network developed swiftly. In February 1992, Good hosted a weekend gathering of eight women at her Elkhart home. Some had not known each other before. They shared with each other the physical and emotional impact that Yoder's actions in the 1970s and 1980s had had on them, as well as longer-term effects on their families, marriages, careers, and friendships. Concerned that Yoder's status afforded him opportunities for continued harassment and abuse, the group was determined to act, despite concerns about "a potentially explosive response when John's behaviour is confronted and made public."[205]

The following morning, by prior arrangement, the women arrived at the home of the pastors of the Prairie Street church to meet with the JHY Task Force and give firsthand accounts of their experiences. They presented a four-page composite statement of Yoder's aggressions toward them, noting that "we know from talking with other women that our experiences do not represent the full scope of John's inappropriate sexual behavior."[206] They requested suspension of Yoder's ministerial credential while Mennonite authorities investigated, and asked that church leaders take responsibility for stopping his misconduct, adding: "We do not feel that invoking Matthew 18 as a model for process is appropriate in this case. . . . A number of us are frightened by John and at this point do not want an ongoing relationship with him."[207] Each woman signed her name but requested that individual identities not be released.[208] After speaking, the women asked: "Do you believe us?" Task

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the author's possession; Martha Smith Good to Marlin Miller, Dec. 4, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Marlin Miller to Martha Smith Good, Dec. 11, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

204. Quotation from Marlin Miller to Gayle Gerber Koontz and Richard Kauffman, March 3, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

205. Martha Smith Good to undisclosed recipients, Feb. 17, 1992, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

206. "Confidential Statement," Feb. 21-22, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; Martha Smith Good to Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Feb. 6, 1992, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

207. "Confidential Statement," quotation from p. 4.

208. Ibid., p. 4; Heggen, "Misconceptions and Victim Blaming," 31.

force members responded that they did, concluding unanimously that the women's reports were credible.[209]

Three weeks later, the task force charged Yoder with thirteen sexual misconduct offenses, noting:

> These charges indicate a long pattern of inappropriate sexual behavior between you and a number of women. The settings for this conduct were in many places: conferences, classrooms, retreats, homes, apartments, offices, parking lots. We believe the stories we have heard, and recognize that they represent deep pain for the women. . . . The stories represent . . . a violation of the trust placed in you as a church leader.[210]

From a Mennonite theologian and friend came an additional plea that Yoder repent for violating women's trust in the context of his churchly authority. "You were next to God to some of them, John," wrote an A.M.B.S. professor, Ted Koontz:

> You abused that power, you betrayed them, you made their faith harder, their lives more burdened. . . . You were terribly powerful in those relationships, and just "asking" before acting does not make the relationship mutual or desired. You are still incredibly powerful in relationship to many of them—it is pure fear of you which has caused many of them to remain silent for so long.[211]

The task force's charges of sexual misconduct buttressed a substantive Mennonite accountability process that would last until 1996. More immediately, however, Yoder faced revelations at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, where he had agreed to give the keynote address at a 1992 conference on nonviolence and violence in American history. Two months before the conference, protests over Yoder's impending appearance prompted a barrage of communications between college administrators and others, including some women who reported past sexual violations by Yoder.[212] The Bethel College president, John Zehr, rescinded the conference invitation, and the campus's student

209. The women regarded the task force members' warm reception as affirming and sensitive.—Tina Mast Burnett to James Lapp, Feb. 28, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; Harold Yoder interview with author; Heggen interview with author; "Summary of 2-22-92 Meeting," Feb. 25, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

210. JHY Task Force memorandum to John Howard Yoder, "Charges of Sexual Misconduct," March 14, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

211. Ted Koontz to John Howard Yoder, Feb. 24, 1992, provided by Ted Koontz, in the author's possession.

212. Conference program, 1992, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001; "The Decision to Disinvite John Howard Yoder to Speak: An Interview with James C. Juhnke," *The Mennonite*, June 2014, 44; James Juhnke, email to author, June 9, 2014.

newspaper, *The Bethel Collegian*, reported the story. Within days *The Mennonite Weekly Review* ran a news feature that led to a wave of journalistic accounts in the Mennonite press, revealing charges of sexual harassment and abuse.[213] Controversy swirled over whether the accusations against Yoder were credible. Related press coverage in the secular press reached a zenith in July 1992, when *The Elkhart Truth* published a five-article series, based on religion writer Tom Price's "interviews over a three-month period with church leaders, theologians, and three of the eight women who brought the allegations to a church panel."[214] Price reported that the scope of Yoder's sexual abuse may have involved thirty women in addition to the eight who had come forward.

At the Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, these developments exacerbated tensions between the pastors and some congregational members. John Howard and Anne Yoder stopped attending services at Prairie Street, and the Board of Elders, concerned about the couple's spiritual well-being, assigned several retired persons to offer pastoral care to them. Task force members, who had earlier assured confidentiality in updates to the congregation, faced criticism from some individuals who wrongly assumed that they had leaked accusations to the press.[215] The task force had been meeting with Yoder for several months but feared that the publicity would trigger his withdrawal from ongoing talks.[216]

Yoder never denied the thirteen charges of sexual misconduct. He responded to the task force that he regarded his usefulness to Mennonite

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213. Cott, "Yoder Disinvited to Conference," *Bethel Collegian*, March 5, 1992, 1; Schrag, "Bethel Withdraws Invitation for Theologian to Speak," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 12, 1992, 3.

214. "Theologian's Future Faces a 'Litmus Test'," *The Elkhart Truth*, July 12, 1992, B-1; B-3. Price used pseudonyms for women who, more recently, have identified themselves as having been among the eight women; Good was "Clara" in the series; Heggen was "Tina." The articles are available online on Ted Grimsrud's website, http://peacetheology.net/john-h-yoder/john-howard-yoder%E2%80%99s-sexual-misconduct%E2%80%94part-five-2/. In citing Price's article, however, Grimsrud's site contains an unfortunate transcription error. The site says Price reported 80 women may have been abused in addition to the eight who came forward. The number that Price actually cited in his reporting was 30, not 80. Some of the women who told their stories to the press received rebukes, including in letters to the editor appearing in Mennonite periodicals; c.f. Winifred Waltner, letter to editor, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, March 19, 1992, p. 4, and Debra H. Bender, letter to editor, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, April 2, 1992. On Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force concerns about victim-blaming, see Harold Yoder to JHY Accountability and Support Group, Oct. 6, 1992, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

215. "Statement from the Elders and Pastors to Be Read on Sunday Morning," March 15, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

216. Harold Yoder interview with author; see also "Price Told the John Howard Yoder Story," *The Mennonite*, Oct. 1, 2013, http://www.themennonite.org/issues/16-10/articles/news_analysis_Price_told_the_John_Howard_Yoder_story.

institutions to be nearing an end, and that he would not be greatly concerned if his ties with the denomination diminished. Task force members countered that in his writings, he had championed accountability to the church.[217] They challenged Yoder's "pattern of rationalization," asking why he had persisted in activities "which held the strong possibility of . . . discrediting your career as a moral theologian."[218] He replied that he had "helped" some women, but expressed regret that he had not adequately understood from some women their level of consent.[219] His stance echoed his arguments to Marlin Miller a decade earlier: as an intellectual engaged with ethical questions, Yoder emphasized, he required freedom to think critically and to arrive at unpopular conclusions, and he could not cave in to expectations that his ideas conform to those of Mennonites seeking to discipline him.[220]

In June 1992, the task force recommended to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference that Yoder's ministerial credential be suspended. Conference officials did so immediately, issuing a statement that "Yoder has violated sexual boundaries" and that the conference was calling on him to enter therapy and make restitution.[221] Those involved in this decision, however, were uncertain how he would respond.

Yoder agreed to participate after three theologians with collegial ties to him—Glen Stassen of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, James McClendon of Fuller Theological Seminary, and Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University—urged him, in a conference call, to commit to the accountability process for the sake of his broader influence and Christian ministry.[222] Having already asserted that he had initiated few "familial" relationships with women since leaving A.M.B.S., Yoder now told the task force that he had communicated with all women with whom he had had "familial" contacts in the past five years to tell them he was

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217. "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John Howard Yoder," June 3, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

218. JHY Task Force to John Howard Yoder, "Summary and Recommendations for Resolution," May 8, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

219. Yoder explained his views that, if both persons involved agreed to stop their physical activities short of intercourse, the relationship was not sexualized.— Ibid.; James Lapp, notes, March 14 and March 26, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

220. "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John Howard Yoder," June 3, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

221. Addendum to CLC Minutes, May 18, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference press release, June 27, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

222. Harold Yoder to JHY Task Force, June 16, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; see also Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 244-245.

discontinuing those relationships.[223] He wrote a statement to be distributed through the task force to the eight women who had accused him of sexual misconduct, in which he referred to "the intensity of my regret for the pain I caused you."[224] Over the next four years, Yoder would contemplate reconciliation with persons harmed, give a modest sum toward financial restitution, undergo therapy, and in all these matters engage closely with a disciplinary group established by the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference's Church Life Commission.[225]

INDIANA-MICHIGAN MENNONITE CONFERENCE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Following the suspension of Yoder's ministerial credential, the JHY Task Force disbanded, turning matters over to the Church Life Commission—a standing committee of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—and to the newly-formed Accountability and Support Group, which the commission appointed in October 1992 to work with Yoder on disciplinary steps. In establishing the Accountability and Support Group, the regional conference was following recently-adopted policies for addressing sexual abuse. Among the protocols, an intervention team was to meet regularly with the person facing charges.[226] Two task force members ensured continuity by joining the Accountability and Support Group: Atlee Beechy, professor of psychology at Goshen College, and Mary Mishler, a Prairie Street elder. Also joining were two Mennonite mental health professionals, Betty Hochstetler and John G. Kaufman.

The Accountability and Support Group began its work with Yoder in November 1992, focusing on setting ground rules for confidentiality, planning for reconciliation with victims and making restitution, and

223. "Minutes of Task Force Meeting with John Howard Yoder," June 26, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

224. John Howard Yoder, "Memorandum to Persons I Have Offended," July 7, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; women who received Yoder's statement responded that it "reflected considerable self-justification by explaining the situation as misunderstanding or misinterpreting his motives and approaches rather than clearly reflecting a confessional and repentance position." See "A Summary of the Responses from Seven Women," Aug. 1992, Accountability and Support Group, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

225. John Howard Yoder to Prairie Street Elders and to the Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission, July 7, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

226. "Draft—Guidelines for Dealing with Alleged Sexual Harassment and/or Abuse," Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, May 18, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files. These newly-adopted guidelines were similar to those in use by the United Church of Christ (UCC) denomination.

arranging for psychological evaluation and therapy.[227] Accountability and Support Group members expected to report the outcomes of Yoder's disciplinary process to the regional conference's Church Life Commission, which had the authority to reinstate or withdraw Yoder's ministerial credential. Although the Accountability and Support Group members envisioned that their task would be challenging, no one anticipated meeting more than thirty times with Yoder over four years in a labyrinth-like process burdened by disputes. Within a year, the regional conference's Church Life Commission, which had appointed the group, considered restructuring it because of philosophical and managerial questions about whether "accountability" and "support" functions could—or should—be combined in the same committee. The group frequently met in homes (the Yoders' and group members') and, over time, the commission perceived that the group, while dedicated in fulfilling its mandate, tilted in the direction of offering support to the Yoders, likely compromising their "accountability" directives. These tensions lingered through the mid-1990s.[228]

On matters of sexual behavior, as far as the Accountability and Support Group could ascertain, Yoder yielded to expectations that he not approach women inappropriately. But in sparring with those attempting to discipline him, he appropriated the language of victimhood for himself.[229] Responding to a Mennonite scholar informing him that his membership on the board of editors of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* was suspended, pending resolution of the Indiana-Michigan disciplinary process, Yoder retorted that, in this set of events, "you are as much a victim as I."[230]

Although in mid-1992 Indiana-Michigan conference officials intended to release a written statement by Yoder that he was working toward reconciliation, his drafts, at best, minimized his actions and suggested

227. Minutes, Accountability and Support Group for John Howard Yoder, Nov. 16, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

228. Family linkages in these two Mennonite committees posed additional complications. Atlee Beechy, A.S.G. chair, was the father-in-law of Gordon Dyck, who led the C.L.C. from 1993 until the accountability process ended in 1996. Dyck's leadership derived in part because the C.L.C.'s chair, Gerald Good—husband of Martha Smith Good—recused himself in Yoder-related matters. The C.L.C. and the A.S.G. differed significantly about how to engage Yoder most effectively.—ASG minutes, June 22, 1993; Addendum to CLC Minutes, Feb. 10, 1994 and April 20, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Nancy Kauffman interview with author, June 5, 2014; Dyck interview with author, June 5, 2014.

229. "ASG Progress Report," May 17, 1994, p. 4, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

230. John Howard Yoder to Walter Sawatsky, Oct. 1, 1992, Mennonite Historical Society Files in the author's possession.

that he was sorry for having misunderstood women's consent. At worst, Yoder's writings shed doubt on his sincerity.[231] Psychological research on the confessions of perpetrators indicates that individuals tend to acknowledge only what they can justify to themselves, and Yoder's statements to Indiana-Michigan conference interrogators apparently followed this pattern.[232] As a result, conference officials decided not to release Yoder's statements nor issue any public information about the disciplinary process. Later, when asked if he had ever apologized for his actions, Yoder asserted: "I was prevented from [doing so] in August 1992."[233] His claim fanned speculation that he had been willing to make a public statement of repentance but had been barred from doing so by conference officials.[234]

Critiques akin to those that Marlin Miller at the seminary had long regarded as the price of confidentiality now came directed to the Indiana-Michigan conference from Christian scholars who yearned for Yoder's reputation to be restored. From Ontario, a Mennonite professor of biblical studies wondered if the commission was taking too much time working for healing between Yoder and his victims: "[T]he longer such a process is stalled," he argued, "the easier it is for the abused and the abuser to exchange roles."[235] Two years later, an appeal from theologians Glen Stassen, Stanley Hauerwas, and Mark Nation arrived on the desks of Indiana-Michigan conference officials, urging swift closure in the disciplinary process and restoration of Yoder to his broader work in the church.[236] "It is our understanding that despite the fact that he considers his views on sexuality to be prophetic," wrote Hauerwas and Nation in a second letter to the Indiana-Michigan conference, "he has used considerable self-restraint and has shown remarkable respect for his

231. John Howard Yoder, "Memorandum to the Prairie Street Elders and Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission," July 7, 1992, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files; John Howard Yoder, "Memorandum to the Prairie Street Elders and to the Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission, Aug. 20, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

232. See Eyal Peer, Alessandro Acquisti, and Shaul Shalvi, "'I Cheated, but Only a Little': Partial Confessions of Unethical Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106 (2014), 202; 214.

233. John Howard Yoder to George R. Brunk III, Jan. 14, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen.

234. For example, see Christa Eshleman, "Seminary Features Yoder: Theologian's Return Raises Questions," *Weather Vane*, v. 42, no. 10, Jan. 23, 1997.

235. William Klassen to Gerald Good, CLC chair, Dec. 15, 1992, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

236. Nation, Stassen, and Hauerwas to Atlee Beechy, June 14, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

Church by not promoting his views publicly anytime during his long teaching career."[237]

But the two regional committees managing Yoder's disciplinary process saw things differently. While they agreed that "the tight lipped process complicates the whole thing," they expected that pending issues, including communications between Yoder and aggrieved women, developing plans for financial restitution, and assessing Yoder's mental health needs, would take time to resolve.[238] Although they faced pressure from Yoder's colleagues—Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists, and others—to restore Yoder to ministry, the commission knew that Yoder himself did not regard his credential as necessary for his ongoing work as a theologian and ethicist at the University of Notre Dame.

In writing and teaching, Yoder had long de-emphasized the significance of his ministerial status.[239] He told Church Life Commission members that his ordination, conducted in 1973 at his parents' Mennonite church in Ohio, "was a fiction in the past and has no meaning for the foreseeable future."[240] In conversations with the commission and the Accountability and Support Group, Yoder expressed doubts about his acceptance among Mennonites.[241] Although his name remained on the membership roster at Prairie Street Mennonite Church, his interests were not narrowly denominational, a stance that complicated matters for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials tasked with disciplining him. They were sincere in their efforts to address Yoder's sexual misconduct, but they were negotiating with a high-profile figure whose long-term cooperation was never assured and whose adversarial bent was considerable. Throughout the four-year process, there would be no quick or easy resolution to any aspect of Yoder's status as a Mennonite churchman, nor would "reconciliation" with many of the women he had targeted prove to be an attainable goal.

As part of the disciplinary process, the Accountability and Support Group took seriously its liaison role between Yoder and any women who wished to confront him. Members of the group kept in regular contact

237. Quotation from Hauerwas and Nation to Yoder Church Discipline Committee, July 7, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Gordon Dyck to Hauerwas and Nation, Sept. 29, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

238. Quotation from Aug. 18, 1994 C.L.C. meeting with Prairie Street elders and pastors, in minutes of Elders meeting, Aug. 24, 1994, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files.

239. C.L.C. Consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

240. John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck, Jan. 16, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

241. Final Report of A.S.G. to C.L.C., June 12, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

with the eight women who had given their accounts to the Prairie Street/JHY Task Force in early 1992. Two had opted for face-to-face meetings with Yoder, which the Accountability and Support Group arranged, and seven of the eight eventually revealed their identities to Yoder, so that by mid-1994, he came to know who had charged him with sexual misconduct before representatives of the Mennonite Church.[242] Although few of the eight women desired contact with Yoder, one additional woman, "Elena," the former A.M.B.S. student who had left the seminary following Marlin Miller's threat of expulsion, requested a meeting with Yoder. In 1993 she and members of the Accountability and Support Group met face-to-face with Yoder and his wife so that she could report the trauma, both initially and in subsequent years, that resulted from Yoder's abuse.[243]

Anne Yoder supported her husband throughout the church disciplinary process, regularly participating in the Accountability and Support Group meetings and occasionally contacting members of the Church Life Commission to advocate for compassion for her husband.[244] Her anger at him, which had been visible to Miller and others in the 1970s, had shifted in the 1980s as A.M.B.S. had forced Yoder's resignation and then banned him from campus events. Over time, she nurtured a protective stance; by the 1990s, she had allied with her husband as he navigated disciplinary measures. In her memoir, published decades later, she referenced "all the turmoil and difficulties" in Elkhart when Yoder's sexual misconduct had become public, and expressed appreciation for the neighborhood Lutheran church that she and her husband had attended during the Mennonite disciplinary process.[245]

In 1995, the Yoders requested a transfer of membership from the Prairie Street congregation to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.[246]

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242. "Progress Report of the ASG," May 17, 1994, p. 3, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

243. Addendum to Church Life Commission Minutes, April 12, 1993, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Betty Hochstetler interview with author, June 5, 2014.

244. Gordon Dyck, handwritten notes, July 26, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Anne Yoder to Gordon Dyck, April 1, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

245. Anne Guth Yoder with Rebecca Yoder Neufeld, *What I Hold Precious*, 176 and 198, n. 8. Friends of the Yoders at Prairie Street Mennonite Church regarded the Lutheran congregation and pastoral leadership as offering a welcoming environment to the couple.—John Bender interview with author, June 6, 2014.

246. John Howard Yoder to Board of Elders, July 3, 1995, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files.

But their friends at Prairie Street hoped that Mennonites near and far could "forgive and forget" so that the Yoders would return to the Prairie Street congregation.[247] Reflecting this desire, Prairie Street's board of elders never acted on the Yoders' transfer request, but intensified efforts to restore congregational relationships with the couple.[248] The Yoders did not press the transfer issue and their membership at Prairie Street remained intact, with the elders formally reaffirming their membership in 1996.[249]

While Prairie Street's elders focused on maintaining contact with the Yoders, members of the Accountability and Support Group realized that no such concentrated effort—by any board or committee—was similarly focused on the women's welfare. Denominational and congregational resources were being channeled into the rehabilitation of John Howard Yoder, but no comparable endeavor addressed the spiritual and emotional needs of women who had been harmed.[250] In most cases, their identities, as well as their hopes for the church accountability process, remained unknown. The Church Life Commission pondered how to communicate with them. Indiana-Michigan conference officials turned for help to the Mennonite Central Committee (M.C.C.), the international relief and development agency, which had already developed a "survivors' list" to connect victims of pastoral abuse in Mennonite contexts. Indiana-Michigan conference officials seized on the idea that since "MCC was also involved in sending JHY around the world," the agency might host a women's communications network and administer restitution funds.[251]

The notion of resourcing through M.C.C. intensified after A.M.B.S. president Marlin Miller, meeting with the Church Life Commission, clarified the international scope of Yoder's sexual misconduct. Miller spoke confidentially of as many as forty women he now knew to have

247. Quotation from Gordon Dyck notes of phone call with Harold Yoder, June 16, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

248. Board of Elders meeting minutes, April 20, 1995, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files; John Bender interview with author.

249. Board of Elders minutes, July 12, 1995, Jan. 23, 1996, and Dec. 6, 1996, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files.

250. Minutes of C.L.C. consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

251. Quotation from John G. Kaufman, minutes of C.L.C. consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Handwritten notes of C.L.C. meeting, summer 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Sherm Kauffman interview with author. One model proposed by Indiana-Michigan conference officials was that M.C.C. might bill offenders for 80 percent of victims' expenses for psychotherapy.—Charlotte Holsopple Glick to C.L.C., July 23, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

been affected by Yoder's sexual harassment, and told the commission that he still received correspondence from women who had personally experienced it.[252] In 1994, two days before Miller's heart attack and tragic death at the age of 55, he wrote to his former student "Elena," expressing regret for Yoder's behavior toward her, telling her that in the aftermath of Yoder's departure, A.M.B.S. had established policies for registering grievances.[253]

At the Prairie Street Mennonite Church, elders were also concerned with restitution. In 1994, the Prairie Street Board of Elders set aside an escrow account, to which Yoder contributed $1,000 and the congregation added an additional $500.[254] Over a series of meetings, the Accountability and Support Group had engaged Yoder on the size of possible restitution and had tested with him the possibility of an extended contribution program based on a percentage of Yoder's income, but Yoder preferred to make a single payment.[255] Restitution, the group asserted, could pay for mental health counseling for victims, reimburse expenses for women who had traveled to Elkhart to confront Yoder, and fund conferences on sexual abuse in religious settings.[256] But no consensus emerged on who might be tapped as additional contributors or how such a fund might be administered. Indiana-Michigan conference officials approached Mennonite Central Committee and other Mennonite agencies with an offer of the $1,500 Prairie Street fund as start-up money, but found no takers.[257]

By the time the accountability process for Yoder ended in 1996, Indiana-Michigan conference officials had not yet found a home for the

252. Addendum to CLC minutes, Dec. 9, 1993, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Summary of meeting of representatives from A.M.B.S., Prairie Street Mennonite Church, and Church Life Commission, Dec. 18, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

253. Marlin Miller letter, Nov. 1, 1994, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001. Miller's statement of regret addressed Yoder's actions, but Miller did not address his own confrontation with her in 1979.—"Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author.

254. Minutes of Board of Elders meetings, Nov. 3, 1994 and Feb. 23, 1995, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files; minutes of C.L.C. and A.S.G. joint meeting, Dec. 18, 1994; MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

255. A.S.G. minutes, Oct. 25, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Dyck interview with author.

256. Addendum to C.L.C. minutes, Sept. 15, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

257. Charlotte Holsopple Glick to C.L.C., July 23, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; minutes of C.L.C. consultation with A.S.G., Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Sherm Kauffman to Gordon Dyck, July 17, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

monies held in escrow. A year later, Prairie Street congregational representatives closed the matter by sending a contribution of $900, at Yoder's suggestion, to the Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle.[258] No information about this disbursement of restitution funds was given to women known to Indiana-Mennonite conference officials to have experienced sexual abuse by Yoder.[259]

Throughout 1994 and 1995, Indiana-Michigan conference officials worried about a potential new complication to their work, asking themselves: "If JHY becomes Lutheran, how will this process change?"[260] Hoping to retain leverage, they encouraged the initiatives by Prairie Street elders to maintain contact with Yoder.[261] He kept his Mennonite affiliation, but in 1995 a significant obstacle to the disciplinary process arose when he withdrew consideration of his ministerial credential from the Church Life Commission. In a letter to the commission, Yoder argued that his case was different from that of several Mennonite ministers who had recently undergone discipline for sexual misconduct while serving in pastorates. As an academic, Yoder no longer desired his ministerial credential, and the commission lost a bargaining chip in their negotiations.[262] Along with members of the Accountability and Support Group, commission members had been hoping to establish an ongoing monitoring plan with Yoder as a condition to restoring his credential. No clear proposals had yet been formulated because the commission believed that, to date, they had not received adequate assessment of his psychological functioning. But with Yoder's withdrawal of consideration of his ministerial status from discussions, the commission had no

258. Later, this organization was renamed the FaithTrust Institute. The Board of Elders at Prairie Street sent $900 to the Seattle organization, and transferred $450 remaining into Prairie Street Mennonite Church's mutual aid fund.—John Howard Yoder to Ray Horst, Feb. 19, 1997, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Records; minutes, Board of Elders meeting, March 4, 1997; Prairie Street Mennonite Church Records; Ray Horst to Sherm Kauffman, May 27, 1997, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

259. "Elena" (pseudonym) interview with author; "Questions," Heggen, et. al.

260. Quotation from C.L.C. Agenda/Report for Consultation with ASG, Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; see also Minutes of C.L.C. consultation with ASG, Aug. 27, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

261. Board of Elders meeting minutes, April 18, 1996, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Records.

262. Yoder referenced the Mennonite ministers Urie Bender, Paul Landis, and James Dunn; John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck and C.L.C., Jan. 16, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; A.S.G. meeting minutes, Feb. 15, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; addendum to C.L.C. minutes, Feb. 16, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

continuing jurisdiction over him; as a result, there would be no plan to monitor his ongoing behavior.[263]

Assessing Yoder's mental health and ensuring appropriate psychological treatment proved fractious, as well. Early in the church's disciplinary process, several Mennonite mental health professionals had recommended that he enter an out-of-state treatment center for sexual addiction, noting that compulsive behavior often requires stronger interventions than individual willpower.[264] Citing distance and expense, Indiana-Michigan conference officials discounted the idea but hoped that locally-provided mental health evaluations and professional counseling would move him toward repentance and apology. Over time, as Yoder remained steadfast in his position that his error had lain in misunderstanding women's consent, Accountability and Support Group members expressed regret that the conference had not pursued residential, group-therapy treatment options.[265]

Initially, the group and Yoder agreed that he would undergo assessment and counseling from a psychologist named Sheridan McCabe, affiliated with the University of Notre Dame; the Accountability and Support Group believed that Yoder's therapy should focus on "misuse of power" in connection with sexual boundaries.[266] A year later, Indiana-Michigan officials were uncertain whether Yoder was continuing to receive counseling, and members of the Church Life Commission questioned whether the psychologist's assessment had been adequate, proposing that a second opinion was in order.[267] For several months, Yoder, supported by the Accountability and Support Group,

263. Gordon Dyck to Sherm Kauffman, Atlee Beechy, and John Howard Yoder, March 20, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; C.L.C. meeting minutes, Jan. 19, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

264. Carolyn Holderread Heggen to the A.S.G., April 16, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Ethel Yake Metzler, email to author, Aug. 3, 2014. On therapies recommended for habitual sexual abusers, see Shupe, *Rogue Clerics*, 147.

265. Final Report of the A.S.G. to the C.L.G., June 12, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

266. Minutes of A.S.G. meetings, Jan. 26, 1993, May 11, 1993, and May 25, 1993, and Jan. 4, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

267. Regarding the report of psychologist Sheridan McCabe, see addendum to minutes of C.L.C. meeting, May 16, 1994, and Addendum to minutes of C.L.C. meeting, Nov. 21, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019. McCabe's report on Yoder, which was forwarded to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials, remains restricted material in the Mennonite Church USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

maintained that no further psychological testing was necessary.[268] Indiana-Michigan conference officials consulted with a Chicago-area expert on sexual misconduct in church settings to help them strategize for moving forward. The consultant, a prominent Episcopalian priest, pushed the Mennonites to arrange for an independent analysis of Yoder's psychological state; she cautioned them that Yoder "could probably manipulate a polygraph."[269]

Given Yoder's bent for argumentation, a central question was whether the Accountability and Support Group or anyone involved in the Mennonites' disciplinary process could adequately challenge him.[270] The Accountability and Support Group, which met with him regularly, had no direct knowledge of Yoder's earlier semantic gamesmanship with Miller at A.M.B.S. or with Cooper at Prairie Street; nonetheless, Yoder's verbal skills were legendary. In late 1994 Church Life Commission members did arrange for a "second opinion," convincing Yoder to make four trips to Chicago for a series of assessments by psychiatrist John F. Gottlieb.[271] Commission members wanted Gottlieb to address two questions in particular: "What evidences are there that John has changed and can redirect his behavior? What evidence is there that John can follow his own 'safe plan'?"[272]

Two months later, Gottlieb, after consulting a Chicago psychologist with expertise in sexual abuse in workplace settings, completed his assessment of Yoder. The Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference's Church Life Commission, in covering the trip costs to Chicago and the associated medical bill, expected to receive the assessment, which required authorization by Yoder. Yoder signed a release for the Church Life Commission, the Accountability and Support Group, and himself to receive the twenty-three-page document, its length owing, Gottlieb wrote, "to the long history, complexity, and administrative issues

268. Gordon Dyck to C.L.C., Dec. 9, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

269. Summary Observations of the C.L.C. Consultation with Chilton Knudsen, May 26, 1994, p. 4, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; on Knudsen's work, see Darlene K. Haskin, et. al., *Restoring the Soul of the Church* (St. Joseph, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995).

270. A.S.G. Progress Report to C.L.C., May 17, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

271. A.S.G. meeting minutes, Dec. 7, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Gordon Dyck to C.L.C., Dec. 9, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Yoder to Gordon Dyck, Jan. 30, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

272. Addendum to C.L.C. Minutes, Dec. 19, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

surrounding this case."[273] The report would become a thorn in the side of all involved. Because Gottlieb took a "less favorable" view of Yoder's functioning than the earlier, "quite favorable" conclusions reached by McCabe, the psychologist affiliated with Notre Dame, the commission recommended that the Indiana-Michigan conference withdraw Yoder's ministerial credential.[274]

Yoder, upon reading the new document, immediately revoked the Accountability and Support Group's access to it, claiming in a letter to the commission that "I did not intend to authorize him to circulate . . . the large bulk of damaging raw notes and quotes gratuitously gathered and passed on in Gottlieb's report."[275] Yoder expressed anger that copies of the report were now in the hands of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite officials and committee members and demanded that all copies be destroyed.[276] The commission disagreed, noting that "since the IN-MI Conference asked for this report, and originally had permission from JHY to receive it, that IN-MI has the right to keep and file it. This report contains information which supports CLC's decision not to return JHY's credential."[277]

The dispute over Gottlieb's assessment of Yoder's mental health—and the right of Mennonite interrogators to have that information—signaled that the disciplinary proceedings would miss the mark of reconciliation and restoration. Yoder was acutely apprehensive about the implications of all this information for his legacy. In 1996 he informed Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials that he was consulting a lawyer about, as he phrased it, "whether the cause of the kingdom is

273. John Gottlieb to Gordon Dyck, March 15, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019. The psychologist consulting with Gottlieb was Alan Friedman, Ph.D. Indiana-Michigan conference officials negotiated the assessors' charges from $2,860 down to $2,200. Addendum to C.L.C. minutes, April 6, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

274. Quotations from Sherm Kauffman, "Consultation with Greg Hartzler re: JHY Case," Sept. 18, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Addendum to C.L.C. minutes, April 6, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

275. By the time of Yoder's revocation of the release, members of the C.L.C. as well as Atlee Beechy, chair of the A.S.G., had read the report.—John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck and Atlee Beechy, April 10, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

276. John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck, July 10, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

277. Quotation from C.L.C. report to Indiana-Michigan Executive Committee, Aug. 31, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; C.L.C. Report to Executive Committee, Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

served by perpetuating an archive on the process."[278] For the rest of his life, he would remain in a standoff with Mennonite officials over their right to the report. Yoder's wishes prevailed after his death, and no known copies of the psychiatric assessment exist, since in 2001 Indiana-Michigan conference officials destroyed their one remaining copy.[279]

The sociologist Anson Shupe notes that religious institutional bodies faced with having to respond to sexual abuse seek to neutralize conflict in an effort to restore authority in their institutions.[280] As long as the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference had a disciplinary hold upon Yoder, Christian concepts of repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration, rooted in biblical justice, all carried important rhetorical functions. This was true for Accountability and Support Group members, Church Life Commission members, and the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference executive committee, which ultimately commended Yoder for further writing and teaching in Mennonite contexts. These ecclesiastical bodies' interests in bringing the disciplinary matter to an end diverged from Yoder's interests.

Although the Indiana-Michigan conference committees had failed to establish a restitution fund to benefit Yoder's victims, opted not to reinstate his credential, had no "safe plan" in place for monitoring his behavior, and had not secured therapy for him in the aftermath of Gottlieb's psychiatric assessment, in 1996 weary church representatives sought to bring an end to the process.[281] Conference officials now faced a thankless task: crafting a public statement about Yoder's status that would be parsed by readers, many with significant stakes in the matter. Contemplating the parties whose interests had to be taken into account,

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278. John Howard Yoder to Sherm Kauffman, Dec. 16, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

279. For six years, one remaining copy of the Gottlieb report was held in the restricted Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files. In 2001, more than three years after Yoder's death, members of Yoder's family requested that the document be destroyed. In response, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials sought legal counsel and on June 1, 2001, took action to ensure "that the copy of Dr. Gottlieb's report be deleted from [Yoder's] file and destroyed." A note placed in the file states: "The Gottlieb report stated a considerably different point of view from an evaluation conducted by Sheridan McCabe that is included in the file. It cited several deficiencies in the McCabe report that Gottlieb then explored as part of his evaluation and reporting, thus coming to a different conclusion."—Confidential File for John Howard Yoder Addendum Note to Executive Committee Minutes, June 1, 2001, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

280. Bromley and Cress, "Narratives of Sexual Danger," 148.

281. After the disciplinary process ended, Indiana-Michigan officials speculated that a denomination-wide restitution fund to benefit victims of sexual abuse might be established with Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries. See Sherm Kauffman to John Howard Yoder, Nov. 20, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

the Indiana-Michigan conference executive secretary, Sherm Kauffman, drew up a diverse list: Yoder and his family; women who had experienced sexual misconduct; the Prairie Street congregation; the Church Life Commission; the Accountability and Support Group; the Executive Committee of the Indiana-Michigan conference; A.M.B.S.; and the wider Mennonite church. Ever hopeful, Kauffman jotted down the word "closure" alongside this brainstorming list.[282]

But closure would be elusive. Relations with Yoder had deteriorated over the dissemination of the Gottlieb report, and officials of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference were concerned enough about a potential lawsuit over their retention of the medical record and the hundreds of documents they intended to archive that they sought legal advice.[283] Ultimately, the conference passed over its attorney's counsel to consider releasing no public statement at all; refraining from releasing a statement, he had argued, would minimize "liability for breach of confidentiality, privacy, and ministerial privilege."[284] But neither did the conference adopt a suggestion by the Accountability and Support Group that the proposed news release invite women who wanted to "make some reconciling contact with Yoder" to phone the Indiana-Michigan conference offices.[285] At least seventeen drafts of a press release circulated among Indiana-Michigan Mennonite conference officials, Yoder, and others.

In the end, the heavily-edited statement, sent to Mennonite papers in June 1996, announced that Yoder's disciplinary process was over. The release commended Yoder "for participating in the process to its conclusion" and encouraged "the church to use his gifts of writing and teaching."[286] Although the release noted that Yoder's ministerial credential would not be reinstated, no reasons were given, and while it

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282. Sherm Kauffman, "Groups with Interests in JHY News Release," c. 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

283. Minutes of Indiana-Michigan Executive Committee, Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1995, p. 3, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

284. Quotation from Greg Hartzler to Sherm Kauffman, Jan. 17, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

285. Quotation from "Rough Draft #2," c. 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; John Howard Yoder to Gordon Dyck and C.L.C., Oct. 2, 1995, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

286. Quotations from news release, "Disciplinary Process with John Howard Yoder Draws to a Close," 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Sherm Kauffman to *Gospel Herald*, *Gospel Evangel*, and *Mennonite Weekly Review*, June 6, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019; Notes of consultation with Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Sherm Kauffman, Willard Swartley, Ted Koontz, and Gayle Gerber Koontz, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

recommended use of an accountability plan, it offered no details. Nor did the release address the issue of restitution. Although Indiana-Michigan conference officials had hoped that Yoder would write a public statement of apology that they could issue alongside the conference's statement, he declined to do so. In preceding years, Yoder had expressed regret to several women who had confronted him directly, but in 1996 he did not want to issue a blanket statement when he felt he had "no voice" in unresolved matters with the Indiana-Michigan conference.[287]

Bearing the Costs

The press release was a disappointment to the women who four years earlier had reported their experiences to Mennonite officials. Through updates provided by the Accountability and Support Group, they had been kept apprised of the Indiana-Michigan conference's substantive efforts to challenge Yoder. From their perspective, Yoder had been called to repentance by his church but had not repented. The press release provided no evidence that Yoder's behavior had changed, nor assurance that he was unlikely to offend again, and it conveyed little regard for victims and the costs they had borne in bringing Yoder's past to light.[288]

The harms to women were varied and deeply personal. Some women remained in the Mennonite church, but others, disillusioned by their denomination's seeming inability to confront Yoder, left. Some redirected their careers away from pastoral ministry or church administration. While women and their allies bore the costs of alienation from a church that had earlier nurtured them, the losses were not only personal. Some, critical of institutional responses to Yoder's abuse, asked whether Mennonites produced so few female theologians because Yoder's legacy pushed women away from seminary study and onto alternative vocational paths.[289]

These questions would linger for decades following the conclusion of Yoder's disciplinary process with the Indiana-Michigan conference. For Yoder, on the other hand, the 1996 press release opened the way for new speaking invitations. In January 1997 he traveled to Harrisonburg, Virginia, as a featured lecturer on peace theology for Eastern Mennonite Seminary's annual leadership training event. The seminary's invitation became a flashpoint for faculty and students dismayed by their school's offer of a public forum for him to speak, given that the press statement

287. Quotation from John Howard Yoder to Sherm Kauffman, March 8, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

288. Good interview with author; Heggen interview with author.

289. Heggen, email to author, Sept. 29, 2014.

released just months earlier had not included an apology.[290] The controversy prompted Eastern Mennonite Seminary leaders to request from Yoder a statement "renouncing the wrongs of the past."[291] Yoder replied with a five-sentence statement on the Mennonite disciplinary process, saying in part that "I regret the institutional decisions which have permitted the persistence of the misperception that I had not repented or apologized."[292] The invitation to speak stood, and Yoder made his campus presentation as planned, responding to a question posed about what he had learned in the past four years by saying that "there isn't anyone I've hurt that I haven't wanted to apologize to and I'm grateful for those who have forgiven me."[293]

Through the last year of his life, John Howard Yoder gave substantial energy to scholarly endeavors at the University of Notre Dame. Nearby, at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, a new president, J. Nelson Kraybill, was inaugurated in the spring of 1997. It was a new day for the Mennonite seminary, and contemplating the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference's advice that the church use Yoder's gifts of teaching, his former faculty colleagues discussed how they might extend a reconciling gesture.[294] An opportunity came during the fall semester, when A.M.B.S. faculty and administrators invited Yoder to teach a seminary course on Christianity, war, and peace. Yoder's former student and colleague, Willard Swartley, extended the invitation, assuring Yoder that after a thirteen-year ban, he was now welcome on campus. Few students questioned the seminary's decision,

290. Barbra Graber, "In the Case of the Mennonite Church's Invitation to Return John Howard Yoder To His Honored Place as a Teacher of Peace and Reconciliation Among Us," c. Jan. 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; George R. Brunk III to Barbra Graber, Jan. 8, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

291. Duane Sider and George R. Brunk III to John Howard Yoder, Jan. 11, 1997, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

292. John Howard Yoder to George R. Brunk III, Jan. 14, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002. Yoder stipulated that his newly-written statement not be circulated or posted publicly, and E.M.U. officials complied.—Beryl Brubaker, George R. Brunk III, and William Hawk to E.M.U. Community, Jan. 16, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

293. Quotation from Yoder in Christa Eshleman, "Seminary Features Yoder: Theologian's Return Raises Questions," *Weather Vane*, v. 42, no. 10, Jan. 23, 1997; see also Goossen, "Campus Protests and John Howard Yoder," *Mennonite Life* (forthcoming, 2015).

294. Erland Waltner to Willard Swartley, Jake Elias, and Ted Koontz, Oct. 24, 1996, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; Nelson Kraybill email to John Howard Yoder, March 12, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; Ted Koontz interview with author; Ben Ollenburger interview with author, June 7, 2014;

and Yoder's return as a part-time lecturer to campus during the fall of 1997 was uncontroversial.[295]

Through that fall, elders and others at Prairie Street Mennonite Church continued to hope that Anne and John Yoder would return to worship as members of the congregation. A new pastor was arriving, and the couple attended an informal gathering at his home. On December 28, 1997, the Yoders attended a Sunday service at their longtime Mennonite congregation.[296] It marked a return from the Lutheran church and a quiet homecoming; in coming decades, Anne Yoder would regularly attend the Prairie Street church and maintain close friendships there.

Two days after the Prairie Street morning service, on December 30, John Howard Yoder died suddenly at age 70 after suffering a heart attack. In the days and weeks to come, tributes to him emphasized themes of renewal. Nelson Kraybill, the A.M.B.S. president, told the *South Bend Tribune* that "I would regret if his personal failures, which John Yoder acknowledged, were more widely publicized than the process of restoration and forgiveness."[297] Atlee Beechy, the Goshen College psychology and peace studies professor who had chaired the Accountability and Support Group through the four-year Mennonite disciplinary process, echoed Kraybill's words as a wise, sensitive approach for those contemplating Yoder's legacy, adding: "May the healing continue!"[298]

High Stakes for Mennonite Identity

Over the past two decades, emerging scholarship has intensified interest in Yoder's peace theology in view of the sexual abuse perpetrated at A.M.B.S. and far beyond. Public discourse surrounding narratives of Yoder's life, evident from strong interest in his writings, persona, and legacies of abuse, underscore the significance of this story for the collective identity of North American Mennonites. For those who in the mid- to late-twentieth century admired Yoder for carrying notions of Christian nonviolence and discipleship to the larger world, the

295. Yoder completed the teaching of the course, filling in for the regular professor who was on leave.—Nelson Kraybill, "John Howard Yoder as Lecturer in Ethics Course," Oct. 6, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; John Howard Yoder to Willard Swartley, Sept. 18, 1997, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002; Nelson Kraybill, interview with author, June 6, 2014; Swartley interview with author.

296. John Bender interview with author.

297. "Theologian, N.D. Instructor Yoder Dies," *South Bend Tribune*, Jan. 1, 1998, B-5.

298. Atlee Beechy to Nelson Kraybill, Jan. 6, 1998, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

theologian embodied Mennonitism. In more recent years, many individuals and a number of organizations—including Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Mennonite Church USA—have attempted to influence the representation of his abuses in the press and through electronic media.[299] Consequently, this narrative about Yoder and the women he targeted illuminates contested interpretations by claimants with stakes in Mennonite identity and theology. But as long as Yoder remains the key actor in this story, the perspectives of women who challenged his sexual violence and identified its detrimental costs are sidelined.

Yoder's sexualized behaviors cannot be dismissed, as some have suggested, as mere "peccadilloes," a term that implies an indulgent appetite of little consequence.[300] Writing in 1992, A.M.B.S. president Marlin Miller described Yoder's behavior as ranging "from what some people would consider bad taste and social ineptitude to what any Mennonite congregation or any Christian institution would consider immoral."[301] During Yoder's life and since his death, many with knowledge of his abuse have assumed that he struggled with sexual addiction. Others—including some former colleagues and students who recall his social awkwardness—have wondered if Yoder may have had Asperger syndrome.[302] Yet these unsubstantiated speculations offer no insight into Yoder's sexual aggressions toward so many women. Still others seeking to understand Yoder's seemingly inexplicable behavior have offered religious explanations: demon possession—that is, sin

299. Observers claiming Mennonite identity, as well as some who do not characterize themselves as Mennonite, have participated in vigorous debates about Yoder's past; cf. Sara Wenger Shenk, "A (Potentially Transformative) Teachable Moment," Sept. 12, 2013, http://www.ambs.edu/publishing/blog/10153/2013/9; Stephanie Krehbiel, "The Woody Allen Problem: How Do We Read Pacifist Theologian (and Sexual Abuser) John Howard Yoder?," *Religion Dispatches* (2014), http://religiondispatches.org/the-woody-allen-problem-how-do-we-read-pacifist-theologian-and-sexual-abuser-john-howard-yoder/; and Lisa Schirch, commentary, June 25, 2014, http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2014/05/01/the-church-discipline-of-john-howard-yoder-2/.

300. William Klassen email to Ross Lynn Bender, Oct. 9, 2004, online, rossbender.org/AMBS-JHY.pdf.

301. Marlin Miller to Victor Stoltzfus, March 20, 1991, AMBS Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001.

302. On the Asperger's notion, cf. Ted Grimsrud, "Word and Deed: The Strange Case of John Howard Yoder," *Thinking Pacifism Blog*, Dec. 30, 2010, http://thinkingpacifism.net/-2010/12/30/word-and-deed-the-strange-case-of-john-howard-yoder/; Glen Stassen, "Glen Stassen's Reflections on the Yoder Scandal," *Thinking Pacifism Blog*, Sept. 24, 2013, http://thinkingpacifism.net/2013/09/24/glen-stassens-reflections-on-the-yoder-case/; and David Cramer, David, Jenny Howell, Jonathan Tran and Paul Martens, "Scandalizing John Howard Yoder," http://theotherjournal.com, July 7, 2014, note 7.

requiring exorcism via the strongest spiritual resources available through Yoder's own professed Christian faith.[303]

Admirers of Yoder's theology have cited these and other notions in attempting to explain his behavior. Yet those who offer medicalized theories about whether Yoder struggled with undiagnosed Asperger's, as well as those who gloss over the Mennonites' disciplinary processes as triumphant restoration, continue in the tradition of Marlin Miller by keeping the focus on Yoder himself rather than on the consequences of his actions.[304] Such explanations deflect attention away from institutional complicity and reveal Yoder's followers' attempts to explain away his misdeeds so that they might reclaim his theology.[305] Just as Miller, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, used his authority to silence Elena because he held Yoder in such high esteem, a number of recent interpreters have continued to minimize Yoder's history of sexual abuse while highlighting his theological career.[306]

During the 1990s, Yoder himself was dismissive of the various moral, psychological, and religious diagnoses that institutional challengers set before him. But he had weighty supporters who argued against the monitoring of his "internal attitudes and convictions" even though they noted that Yoder "may not quite understand why the women are hurt. He may believe his theory about sexuality is right."[307] Those who took this position viewed Yoder's restoration as essential. In 1996, at the conclusion of Yoder's disciplinary process, the ethicists Stanley Hauerwas and Glen Stassen commended Mennonite officials for work well done and for a satisfying endpoint, since "Churches have a tremendous need for his gifts."[308] For Hauerwas and Stassen, eminent leaders in their fields, restoring Yoder to *his* place of eminence was only right, since, in their words, "Mennonites are admired for Christian

303. Ted Koontz, journal entry, Feb. 14, 1992, provided by Ted Koontz, in the author's possession.

304. Invoking Asperger syndrome in connection with sexual abuse also perpetuates prejudice; on scholars' irresponsibility in this matter, see Hamilton and Lambelet, "A Dark Theme Revisited: How to Read Yoder's Sexualized Violence."

305. See, for example, "The Yoder File," editorial, *The Christian Century*, Aug. 20, 2014, p. 7.

306. Cf. Glenn Friesen, "The Church Discipline of John Howard Yoder: Legal and Religious Considerations," 2014, http://www.members.shaw.ca/chronicle/Yoder.html and Mark Thiessen Nation, coauthored with Marva Dawn, "On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder," Sept. 23, 2013, http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013-/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/.

307. Quotation from Hauerwas and Nation to Yoder Church Discipline Committee, July 7, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

308. Glen Stassen and Stanley Hauerwas to Sherm Kauffman, July 22, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

discipline and sometimes criticized for not practicing enough forgiveness and grace."[309] From afar, Hauerwas and Stassen cast a glow on a process that Yoder himself dismissed. After months of struggle with Indiana-Michigan conference representatives over their right to retain Gottlieb's psychiatric report, Yoder concluded that "the initially stated goal of restoration has been abandoned."[310]

Others interpreting the same events have focused less on restoration and more on reconciliation. Olive branches extended in the form of visits, calls, meal invitations, and cordial notes from elders and others at the Prairie Street Mennonite Church encouraged the return of the Yoders to their Mennonite congregation.[311] Similarly, efforts in 1996 and 1997 at A.M.B.S. to invite Yoder back to campus brought a renewed relationship, in limited measure, between Yoder and his former base. One A.M.B.S. administrator told Yoder in 1996 that "the concept of shunning" no longer carried the day.[312] Still, reconciliation between Yoder and the seminary was compromised by an institutional past burdened with secrets.[313]

The promised restoration of Yoder as churchman, championed by Hauerwas and Stassen, offered reassurance to anyone seeking to read Yoder as a credible theologian. The goal of reconciliation, plumbed diligently by Prairie Street congregants as well as by A.M.B.S. leaders, highlighted the conciliatory stance of some influential Mennonites toward Yoder. But few Prairie Street or A.M.B.S. representatives situated their hopes for "reconciliation" in Yoder's relations with women he had sexually harassed and abused. A more expansive form of reconciliation had been envisioned by Indiana-Michigan conference committee members, who initially worked toward sufficient restitution to be made available for women victims and the development of a "safe plan" to ensure a lower likelihood of recidivism. But these reconciling gestures never occurred, in part because Yoder had earlier—in his theological

309. Ibid.

310. John Howard Yoder to Sherm Kauffman, Dec. 16, 1996, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

311. Church records also indicate discord among members and pastors through the mid-1990s over the theologian's estrangement from his congregation.—Prairie Street Task Force on Church Leadership, memo to congregation, April 21, 1996, Prairie Street Mennonite Church Files; Harold Yoder interview with author; Simon Gingerich interview with author.

312. Quotation from Gerald Gerbrandt to John Howard Yoder, May 13, 1996, AMBS Sara Wenger Shenk Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-002.

313. Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author.

disputation with Marlin Miller over sexual ethics—honed his skills of rationalizing to control the process.[314]

Yoder's ideas about sexuality were at the core of his relationships with many people. These ideas were infused with his theology. In December 1997, a week before his death, in an email to a woman twenty-five years younger whom he had never met but had noticed at a conference, Yoder referred to his own recent experiences with Mennonite discipline. He added that "the [reconciliation] process lost ground" and asked her to aid him "in a confidential exchange about how it might be possible."[315] The recipient, who knew of his history of sexual misconduct, never responded. But Yoder's appeal to her, calling out to engage confidentially, could be read as a quiet reverberation of his behavioral patterns more than two decades earlier when he had enticed young women with "A Call for Aid," saying, "I need your help. . . . They are delicate themes."[316]

Mennonite denominational responses to Yoder's legacy of sexual abuse show the entanglement of a theologian who had long professed a biblical frame for church discipline—*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault*—with institutional figures reluctant, even unwilling, to adjust the frame to mitigate effects of violence and power. During the 1970s and 1980s, leaders at A.M.B.S. used secrecy to guard the reputation of the seminary, and, even more tellingly, guarded Yoder's embodied Mennonitism, a faith tradition that they saw him as representing ably and admirably to the broader world.

But in engaging Yoder's ideas about sexual ethics, Miller and his Covenant Group hurt many people, including themselves.[317] Their exertions were echoed in the 1990s and beyond within fraternal Mennonite institutions—including Herald Press and the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—that aimed to preserve Mennonite identity and polity through precarious negotiations in the fallout of Yoder's actions. By the late twentieth century, some of the secrecy that had characterized Mennonite institutions' responses to Yoder's abuses gave way to new paradigms, most notably a critique of victim-blaming and a reading of Matthew 18 that contextualizes significant power

314. A.S.G. Progress Report to C.L.C., May 17, 1994, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.

315. John Howard Yoder email to "Rosalie" (pseudonym), Dec. 22, 1997, provided by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, in the author's possession.

316. Yoder, "A Call for Aid," 1974, p. 1.

317. Ted Koontz interview with author; Evelyn Shellenberger interview with author; Marcus Smucker interview with author; Richard Kauffman interview with author.

imbalances between parties.[318] Meanwhile, this tragedy reflected how silence, patriarchal assumptions, and concern for damage control enabled an "experiment" that was never an experiment at all, but a theological idea carried along by Mennonite interests for far too long.[319]

318. Cf. Ted Koontz to John Howard Yoder, March 10, 1992, provided by Ted Koontz, in the author's possession, and John K. Stoner to James Lapp, received April 4, 1991, Prairie Street Mennonite Church/JHY Task Force Files.

319. For perceptive commentary on institutional failures in the handling of Yoder's abusiveness, see George R. Brunk III to Sherm Kauffman, Jan. 15, 1997, MC USA Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019.