

ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE SCHOLARS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

www.AnabaptistScholars.net

Volume 6, Number 1
March, 2003

Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network

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The Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network is an initiative of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, Conrad Grebel University College

Editorial

I am happy to draw your attention to the very first conference of which the Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network is an organizer and co-sponsor, along with the Anabaptist Sociology and Anthropology Association and the Hillsdale College Sociology department.

“Ritual In Anabaptist Community” will be held on June 26-28, 2003 at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale Michigan. The program is high calibre; do consider attending! More information is found on pages 11-12. The conference website, which includes downloadable registration forms, is: www.hillsdale.edu/academics/Socialritual.htm

Included in this issue are two responses to previous articles on interdisciplinary teaching and research. Elmer J. Thiessen responds to A. James Reimer's “Theology: An Interdisciplinary Approach” (p. 2). Thiessen questions whether the “level-playing field” ideal of secular academic disciplines has intruded too far upon a Christian ordering of the disciplines. He argues that Christians should advocate a hierarchy of disciplines with “worldviewish theology,” which emerges from Reformed Epistemology, at the top. John Quiring, in a response to the same article, moves in a somewhat different direction (p. 3). He proposes transcending particular disciplines with a comprehensive “trans-disciplinarity” that gives various perspectives on a single reality. Yet, he suggests that a religious philosophy can be an integrative enterprise. (Note: The articles on interdisciplinarity by Reimer and Dan Wessner are available in the June 2002 issue: www.anabaptistscholars.net/2002june.pdf)

I have reproduced a presentation given on

November 22, 2002 by John Kampen, academic dean of Bluffton College, to Mennonite graduate students at a conference sponsored by the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (p. 5). Kampen and other deans were asked to speak about trends in college education and how these effect what kind of faculty institutions are seeking. This analysis was very helpful for those who intend to join the ranks of faculty. However, given that this newsletter's mandate is to discuss issues of general professional concern, I have included it here for wider consideration.

Finally, Lucille Marr reviews *Minding the Church: Scholarship in the Anabaptist Tradition*, edited by David Weaver-Zercher (p. 7). The collection of essays, she writes, is not only about the autobiographical intersection of church and scholarly passions, it is also about an environment that encourages a “spirituality of questions.”

The previous two issues of this newsletter were distributed primarily electronically. However, an informal poll has showed me that readership decreases significantly with this method. In spite of the greater cost, it seems beneficial to be able put a hard copy of the newsletter into the hands of members. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter electronically (i.e. be notified by email that it has been posted to the website), please let me know. For the time being, the default distribution will be in hard copy. Please be sure that your membership profile on the website, especially your mailing address, is kept current. Contact me for a password if you have not used the site before.

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A Hierarchy of Disciplines

A response to A. James Reimer, "Theology: An Interdisciplinary Approach" (see: www.anabaptistscholars.net/2002june.pdf)

By Elmer J. Thiessen

We need to do more by way of providing interdisciplinary education. Here I heartily concur with A. James Reimer, but I also agree with him that we seem to be stuck with disciplines or fields of study. Why? There is so much to know, and so little capability to know. The human mind is rather puny, and so we carve out manageable bits in the vast sea of knowledge.

But how then do we understand academic disciplines and their relationship to each other? Reimer provides us with a fascinating account of his search for a model that will protect the integrity of each discipline, particularly in relation to theological studies. Drawing on Barth, he defines each discipline in terms of its own unique subject matter and methodology. This is also very much along the lines of the contemporary curriculum theory of British educationist, Paul Hirst. Unfortunately, Hirst goes too far in stressing the "autonomy" of each discipline. Reimer is trying to avoid this extreme by allowing for some interdependence between the disciplines, but in the end he falls into the same trap as Hirst - overemphasizing the autonomy of the disciplines. Rejecting Lonergan's attempt to account for similarities between the disciplines, Reimer is more impressed with the differences between them. The interdependence of the disciplines is only granted on an "ad hoc" basis, and is further left rather vaguely defined.

Underlying this central thrust, there is another emphasis in Reimer's essay that might account for the problems noted above. Reimer is concerned about the turf wars between various disciplines. His solution: a level playing field. Repeatedly he reminds us of the need to put all the disciplines on a more equal footing.

But, why this repeated concern about a

hierarchy of disciplines? What is wrong with a "queen of the sciences"? In part I think Reimer's thinking on this matter is shaped by a political position. Note his use of a political analogy - he prefers a "federation" of disciplines working cooperatively towards a common goal. Reimer, I expect, like most of us, favors democratic egalitarianism. But whether democratic egalitarianism is the best form of government is at least open to debate. And even if it is the best form of political government, surely we need to ask whether it is appropriate to extrapolate this model to knowledge and our search for truth.

I opt for a hierarchy of disciplines. I believe philosophy is more important than the sciences. Indeed, in my academic career I switched from physics to philosophy precisely because I found the latter to be more basic - more important. The sciences ultimately rest on philosophical presuppositions. Therefore philosophy is at least the king of the sciences!

But there must be more to Reimer's desire to create a level playing field for the disciplines. Towards the end of his essay, Reimer is quite explicit about his concerns about making a discipline like theology or philosophy the queen of the sciences - in doing so one will become "the laughing stock of the modern academy." But so what! Perhaps the modern academy has got it wrong. And should not the Christian academic be prepared for some ridicule as he or she upholds the truth? Is this not part of the cost of being a follower of Christ? A disciple is not above his Master, our Lord told us (Matt. 10:24-5). I am quite sure that Reimer would concede all this, and so there must be a deeper reason still for his overall emphasis on an equality of disciplines.

Indeed, Reimer suggests that there is a "good reason" for the above response of the modern academy to the idea that there might be a queen of the sciences. He hints at what that good reason might be when he points out that he favors a Barthian path, which, he suggests, "has much in common with post-modern theories of language and knowledge." A question might be raised about the

legitimacy of a connection between Barth and post-modernism. More important for my purposes is Reimer's appeal to post-modernism as a good reason for creating a level playing field for the disciplines. While I agree that we have much to learn from post-modernism, there are dangers in such an appeal, not least of which are the relativistic tendencies inherent in a post-modern epistemology. (Here I am assuming some connection between the notion of equality of disciplines and the notion of equal validity of all truth claims.) As I have argued elsewhere, a properly balanced epistemology must somehow do justice to both the insights of modernism and postmodernism. And so I cannot accept an appeal to postmodern theories of language and knowledge as grounds for dismissing the notion of a hierarchy of disciplines, or as grounds for stressing the near autonomy and uniqueness of each discipline.

I favor the Medieval route – some disciplines are more important than others. But perhaps the most important discipline is not what medieval scholars thought it was. Despite my bias in favor of philosophy as more important than the sciences, I believe there is something more basic than even philosophy. I would suggest that here we have something to learn from what has come to be known as Reformed epistemology. At the heart of all thinking are worldviews or perceptual frameworks (cf. Lonergan's "faith" glasses). The Christian worldview becomes "a

transforming vision" which will change the way one thinks in any discipline — every thought is made captive to Christ (II Cor. 10:5). The most important discipline in a Christian academy or a school of theology should therefore be what Arthur Holmes has labeled "worldviewish theology." Reimer uses a picture to illustrate the equal footing given to the different disciplines – spokes in a wheel all pointing to the center or common goal, identified as theology or "the study of God and all things in relation to God." I propose instead a picture of a series of concentric circles. As we move from the outer circles closer to the center we come to the more important disciplines like philosophy and ultimately worldviewish theology. This model, I would suggest, better illustrates both the autonomy and the interdependence of the disciplines. It also shows why some disciplines contribute more significantly to knowledge than others. Finally it accounts for commonness between the disciplines, given the pervasive influence of the inner worldviewish core.

All disciplines are important, but some are more important than others.

Parentetical note: For an expansion of some of these ideas, and for a diagram to illustrate the model being proposed, see my book, *In Defence of Religious Schools and Colleges* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, chs. 10 & 12; and "Curriculum after Babel," in *Agenda for Educational Change*, edited by

Towards Trans-disciplinarity

By John Quiring

This review discusses A. James Reimer's "Theology: An Interdisciplinary Approach" and raises questions about how Reimer's conceptual scheme may be more fully interdisciplinary. I was invited to respond because I work outside of Mennonite institutions and partly, outside of theology. I teach community college philosophy and am an administrator at the Center for Process Studies which, among other things, employs process theology to frame trans-disciplinary dialogues.

In his article, Reimer reviews his attempts to find an integrative framework for theological studies and an adequate characterization of theology as integrative. It seems to me that Reimer's own conceptual scheme for relating theological sub-disciplines is as good as any. He conceives of theological disciplines as *spokes of a wheel* with God as the *hub* or *axel*. This is also a way of conceiving of "all things in relation to God," or to God as trinity. It conveys a sense of disciplines as being on an "equal footing." The sub-disciplines (*spokes*) he includes are biblical, historical, literary, so-

cial scientific, philosophical, systematic, and pastoral studies.

Earlier in the paper Reimer asks of natural sciences, technology, political and economic sciences, and humanities, "Where do they fit?" I will simply expand his diagram and make more room at the center. In my enlarged diagram, the spokes of the wheel represent math and natural sciences, technologies, social sciences, world history, world geography, ideologies, and humanities (world philosophy, world religions and theology, world art). I suggest that we try to see all disciplines and theological sub-disciplines as different *perspectives* on one reality, with different mixes of objectivity and inter-subjectivity in method. The emphasis on *world* in history, geography, philosophy, religion, and art stands for the recent decolonizing of academic projects. By 'ideologies' I mean conservatism, liberalism, progressivism, etc., as paradigms that shape disciplinary agendas—e.g., tradition, community vs. individual, race, class, and gender individuations and interpretations. Philosophy and theology are both disciplines *and potentially trans-disciplinary*.

Philosophy is potentially a trans-disciplinary, second-order activity, interdependent with sciences and humanities. It can relate to the disciplines as an orchestra conductor relates to the instrumentalists. But when philosophers are preoccupied with canons of integrative texts they are surely disciplinarians, and their methodologies can favor sciences (analytic) or humanities (continental). Then *ad hoc* trans-disciplinary projects emerge by default, inviting philosophy back into contact with slighted academic dimensions. In principle, apologetic and foundational theologies address all or most of the philosophical questions, answering them in terms of a given spiritual tradition, becoming essentially *religious philosophy*.

At the center of *my* wheel, the *convergence of the spokes* indicates trans-disciplinary thinking—the possibility of combining or transcending disciplinary methods. 'Trans-disciplinary' indicates to me the urge for comprehensiveness, while 'inter-disciplinary' can be partial—e.g., cognitive science, political economy, theological studies. Reimer's worry about bias in any trans-disciplinary project is warranted, but from process thought I will pro-

pose the notion of *mutual transformation* as a potential for minimizing bias. While experiences generate interpretations, they can be re-interpreted in light of new experiences. In the context of *the full circle of our knowledge* (Whitehead) all particular interpretations are transformed. Trans-disciplinary projects provide that forum.

For example, science separates itself from pre-scientific modes of knowing. A trans-disciplinary space is sought for the re-integration of science and pre-science. Philosophy is a discipline that *has had* such projects on its agenda. While the fusion of science and religion can be said to be *philosophical*, from a religious starting point, the reinterpretation of religious ideas in light of science can be seen as *theological*. You can retain your personal and academic identities, even as you step outside of them and embrace new experience requiring transformation of identity and modification of disciplinary bias.

Additional hopeful projects for integrative work are the Association for Integrative Studies, the World Congress of Transdisciplinarity, and the Drew Colloquium in Transdisciplinary Theological Studies. AIS is a clearing house for inter- and trans-disciplinary programs in North American education [<http://www.units.muohio.edu/aisorg/>]. The WCT published a "Charter of Transdisciplinarity" demanding dialogue between science and humanities, rejecting reductive analyses, affirming *levels* of reality, being historical *and* transhistorical, cultural *and* transcultural, seeking to open disciplines "to that which they share and to that which lies beyond them," yet respecting Otherness and tolerating ideas opposed to our own. (B. Nicolescu, *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*, SUNY 2002, 147-52). The Drew Colloquium "seeks a third space, neither a synthesis of opposing tendencies nor conflation of disparate disciplines, but a transgressive and transformative, hence transdisciplinary, matrix of reflection,...interfaith,...feminist, multiethnic and transcultural..." [<http://users.drew.edu/mnausner/colloquiahistory.html>].

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Trends in Higher Education: Implications for Teaching Faculty

Adapted from a presentation to Mennonite Graduate Students, November 22, 2002, in Toronto, Ontario.

By John Kampen

This is a time of great challenge and change in higher education. Due to the nature of the differences in the manner in which higher education is structured in the two countries, the specific challenges and changes are somewhat different on each side of the 49th parallel. My comments are rooted in discussions and analyses of higher education on the southern side of the border. In order to give you a flavor of the environment in which US Mennonite colleges and universities exist, I am going to focus on three major reports that have appeared within the past six months; in other words I am going to give you a brief survey of “what deans read” in order to discuss future opportunities for faculty in our colleges. Of course, my understanding is shaped more specifically by my experience at Bluffton College.

I. Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College

This project is the report of a concentrated two-year study in which about 25 educational leaders drafted an outline of the present state of higher education in the US and prepared recommendations about its future direction. It is based upon the presupposition that higher education has become broadly available to a very large percentage of the population, but the system is not functioning in such a way that it recognizes this reality nor are most institutions of higher education using models that are suited to such a mission.

For our purposes the most important umbrella recommendation of the report is their focus on a practical liberal education, more clearly expressed in the phrase, “a rigorous, practical liberal education for all students.” It seems to me that both of the key terms are crucial. What the authors of this report had to acknowledge is that educational models designed to train an elite are not appropriate when universal access is an important value. The elite have their “jobs,” their roles somewhat designed for them and their responsibility is to find their personal place within

those roles and an education that helps them carry those out. This is not true for the vast majority of students now enrolled in higher education.

The “practical” side of this is important. The vast majority of our students struggle with the question of vocation and then the very specific issue of “job”. The high debt loads of college graduates add further weight to the importance of this observation. Our graduates need to come out possessing a high level of skills appropriate to their chosen field, so that they can be competitive and live satisfying and productive lives upon graduation. A high priority on this aspect of our task is somewhat new to the self-understanding of many of us in college education. At the same time many of the viewpoints developed from a liberal education are also crucial for the future well-being of our students.

This, of course, has been the strong point of education for the small liberal arts colleges, including the Mennonite institutions. In the present day, critical thinking, adaptability, globalization, diversity, a comprehensive worldview, integrity, communication, cross-cultural adaptation and technology are a few of the items on the short-list of perspectives required of our students and that we are particularly well-suited to develop. For the student of the future, a “practical liberal education” will be crucial and our institutions’ well-being will probably rest on the level of our ability to deliver on that paradigm.

What does this mean for future faculty members of our colleges?

a. There is some mismatch between the students that are graduating with traditional disciplinary degrees and our need for highly-qualified faculty members in professional areas. This is a national problem not peculiar to our colleges.

b. Graduates in traditional disciplinary areas that have the adaptability and insight (by interest, inclination or experience) to use the depth of knowledge acquired to apply to more “practical” concerns and specific professional education will be of considerable importance for our future.

II. Meeting the Competition: College and University Presidents, Faculty, and State Legislators View the New Competitive Academic Arena

This report outlines the competitive environment in which institutions of higher education presently function. Enrollment challenges, discussions of discount rates, advertising budgets, etc., document this reality for private colleges as a whole and for our Mennonite colleges. The annual appearance of articles describing the experiences of small liberal arts colleges that have closed their doors in the past year testify to the same reality. Factors coming into play include the increasing role of corporate education, both in-house educational systems within corporations to meet their own educational needs as well as for-profit educational corporations that are being quite successful. Learning how to be institutions that effectively function and compete in this environment is not an insignificant challenge.

One of the important implications of this reality for future faculty is that effective and good teaching will be a paramount demand for all faculty members. One of our strongest appeals will be in the quality of our teaching and in the manner in which direct and regular contact with our students impacts their lives. The level of competition will not permit us to “hide” the ineffective professor, no matter her other attributes. Effective teaching will be a paramount demand of future faculty.

III. The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2001-2002 HERI Faculty Survey

The headline in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* announcing this report read, “A kinder, less ambitious Professoriate.” This national study of faculty occurs every four years. This year it covered 32,480 full-time faculty members. The headline is important for us because it indicates that higher education is moving toward a greater emphasis on the values that have characterized education at our colleges such as student contact, teaching takes precedence over research, education impacts on the total person, etc. We should rejoice at these changes.

The problem is when this reality comes into conjunction with the environment spelled out in the second article above. Those characteristics that we prized and valued as our distinctives are becoming much more broadly accepted throughout the discipline at a time when the competition for students, allegiances and donor dollars is becoming much more intense. Near Bluffton the one state university advertises itself as offering “a small college environment with a great range

of possibilities.” The other state university is running an ad highlighting how interested its faculty are in their students both inside and outside the classroom and using the phrase “preparation for life.”

What this means for our future faculty members is simply that they are going to have to be very good if our institutions are going to remain forward-thinking and viable. The demands on those faculty members will be intense, but our context will still provide opportunities not available in larger and different institutions.

Conclusion:

Our institutions will need very good and skilled faculty members with extremely high academic abilities. Of particular value will be the faculty member that has some extremely good in-depth work of a high-level research quality while demonstrating the ability to make that knowledge and that way of working applicable in a variety of situations and vocations. I would describe this as a move from valuing the “comprehensive generalist” to the “adaptable specialist.” The development of these persons is necessary for the survival of our schools, hence I believe for the survival of our movement and denomination (s).

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Bibliography:

Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College (National Panel Report; Washington: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002)
www.greaterexpectations.org

John Immerwahr, *Meeting the Competition: College and University Presidents, Faculty, and State Legislators View the New Competitive Academic Arena* (Providence: The Futures Project: Policy for Higher Education in a Changing World; Brown University, 2002)
www.futuresproject.org

Jennifer A. Lindholm, Alexander W. Astin, Linda J. Sax and William S. Korn, *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2001-2002 HERI Faculty Survey* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, 2002)

Review of

David Weaver-Zercher, editor. *Minding the Church: Scholarship in the Anabaptist Tradition*. Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., 2002. 280 pages.

By Lucille Marr

For me, reading *Minding the Church* felt like coming home. In this rich collection, fourteen scholars share their faith journey through personal narrative, as it was shaped by what are often perceived to be two opposing poles — church *and* scholarly passion. David Weaver-Zercher, a professor at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania, edited this *estschrift* as a gift to his former teacher Morris Sider, upon the latter's retirement from that college in spring 2000. The theme was carefully chosen to reflect Sider's life-long commitment to "scholarship in the Anabaptist tradition" (13).

In his introduction, Weaver-Zercher suggests that for many Christian scholars, their work holds "spiritual significance" equal to other callings such as "evangelism, justice work, and spiritual mentoring." "For if the primary purpose of the church is to establish God's reign in the world," he writes, "the primary purpose of colleges and universities is to pursue truth, formulate the best approximations

of truth, and disseminate those approximations to their various constituencies." He goes further to insist that "all scholars — not just theologians, and not just those who consider themselves Christians — participate in the process of exploring God's creation and articulating what they find" (19). But for the Christian, scholarship is different. A Christian scholar may well ask different questions and may well choose research agenda dictated by faith concerns, as tailored by his or her commitment to the church.

Thus emerged the paradigm — *Minding the Church*. The writers in the collection are all "intellectuals who, through both calling and training, have devoted their intellect and their creativity to the service of the church." They come from a variety of backgrounds including the non-Mennonite evangelical sub-culture. But historian Perry Bush speaks for most when he writes: "*Being in the church*" is "the first condition for the possibility of doing faithful scholarship" (72). Bush, David Mosley and Susan Biesecker-Mast were all drawn to the



The Conrad Grebel Review

An interdisciplinary journal published by
Conrad Grebel University College

Fall 2002 (current issue): The 2002 Bechtel Lectures: Stanley Hauerwas

Winter 2003: Is God Nonviolent?

Spring 2003: Issues in the Future of Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholarship: Papers from a graduate student conference held at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, Nov, 2002

Special Network member's rate: Canada: \$24/year; \$18 (student); Cdn funds
US: \$18/year; \$15 (student); US funds

Single Issues: Canada: \$10 + \$2 mailing; US: \$7 + \$2 mailing

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Mennonite community by the possibilities provided by the Anabaptist Vision as articulated by John Howard Yoder. For Biesecker-Mast, the discovery of an Anabaptist body of believers was a crucial step in her faith journey. For Bush, "Uncovering usable pasts for a socially engaged church was the only way that I could legitimate the life of the mind that I thought socially irresponsible but was unable to turn away from" (73).

Most of the writers were raised in churches in the Anabaptist tradition. Besides history, Anabaptist scholars have had the longest and most comfortable relationship with the discipline of sociology, with its ability to help Mennonites understand their ethnic boundaries and how they fit into the world. Donald Kraybill, for instance, reflects on how his love of the church influenced him to write the *Upside-Down Kingdom*, a sociologically informed reading of the synoptic gospels.

Reflecting on the "responsibility" that Anabaptist scholars "often feel ... to attend to the church's concerns," some, like Jeff Gundy, reflected on their frustrations as they have confronted "the theological, cultural, and political boundaries set by the institutional church" (25). Those schooled in social sciences including psychology, economics, and political science have faced new challenges as they have reflected on ways in which they have drawn on their Mennonite faith heritage to understand the world from other perspectives. For instance, Alvin Dueck reversed his denomination's mistrust of psychology as a "worldly" profession" (112). "It was only after the recovery of my Anabaptist theological heritage" and "communal identity" he writes, that he was "finally able to *both* find a place for psychological perspectives *and* be faithful to my ethnoreligious vision of reality" (113-14).

James Harder and Mark Charlton write how they were inspired to pursue careers in other social science disciplines by MCC assignments. Harder returned from an extremely poor area of Kenya with a desire to "better understand the economic systems that fostered the tremendous disparities in wealth" (127). Mark Charlton's interest in political science was furthered by his MCC experience in Zaire, as "I witnessed firsthand the bitter fruits of a military dictatorship" (144). Both seek oppor-

tunities to bring healing to a broken world by better understanding the world around them.

Biblical scholars Terry Brensinger and Mary Schertz envision a church strengthened by people interested in understanding their Jewish and Christian heritage. Brensinger, an Old Testament scholar wants Mennonites "to do something with the Old Testament." A New Testament scholar, Schertz lives out her belief that as Mennonites, we need to practice our "noble intention to engage every believer in discerning the Word" (189).

For some it is about vocation, but for all, their scholarship is a personal quest. Mosley puts it best when he says, "my question about meaning invites, even demands, that I continuously strive toward the integration of my spiritual quest with my vocation.... It is my contention that the role of the professor/scholar in a church-related institution of higher education is to model the manner in which questions can become the basis for a way of life" (94). Or, as theologian Lydia Harder put it: "It has been my search for wholeness and unity that has encouraged me to ask ultimate questions and seek universal truth" (193).

Four of the fourteen are women, but Harder is the only one to embed her search for "universal truth" in the "implicit division between males and females" (196). How many other academic women can relate to the self-doubt Harder experienced when her desire to follow her "calling from God to practice theology" that would take her into the public sphere was questioned? (196)

While Harder's story points out the particular difficulties faced by women, most would concur that it is "exceedingly difficult" for a scholar of either sex to be "accountable to both the church and the scholarly community" (206). As Jay McDermond, a professor of Christian Ministries, put it: "the academy is not friend to the church," for it seems to "undercut much for which the church strives." Yet these writers show how they have found healing in a community that allows for a spirituality of questions. To a person, their commitment is foremost to the church and, as Shirley Hershey Showalter put it in her response to these articles, "the church needs scholars to help it sort through the complexities of the world, to provide careful analyses of issues and events, and to serve as mentors to thought-

ful and committed people who will become church leaders" (228).

Yes, *Scholarship in the Anabaptist Tradition* is about *Minding the Church*. But it is also about finding a comfortable place in the church. It is about an environment that allows for a particular spirituality, the spirituality of questions. These writings are thoughtful and reflective, and each is worth reading on its own merits. They have provided the opportunity to do what the objectivity of the scholarly mind rarely permits -- to connect the personal

with the academic. In this volume we hear voices new and old on the Anabaptist scholarly scene, but in every case, the perspective is fresh. I highly recommend *Minding the Church* to anyone who shares the spirituality of questions expressed by these scholars in the Anabaptist tradition.

Lucille Marr is a visiting professor of religious studies at McGill University and co-pastor of the Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec. marrl@vl.videotron.ca

New Publications:

Isaak, Jon M. *Situating the Letter to the Hebrews in Early Christian History*. Edwin Mellen Press, 2002.

Kasdorf, Julia. *Fixing Tradition: Joseph W. Yoder, Amish American*. The C. Henry Smith Series, no. 4. Pandora Press U.S.; co-published with Herald Press, 2002.

Lederach, John Paul and Jan Jenner. *Into the Eye of the Storm: A Handbook of International Peacebuilding*, Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Nisly, Lamar. *Impossible to Say: Representing Religious Mystery in Fiction by Malamud, Percy, Ozick, and O'Connor*. Greenwood Press, 2002.

Roop, Eugene F. *Ruth, Jonah, Esther*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Herald Press, 2002.

DreamSeeker Magazine is a new Anabaptist-related periodical dedicated to connecting readers and writers interested in attending to "voices from the soul." will chart its own course while also participating in the broader mission of Cascadia Publishing House, which includes "aiming to give voice to authors able to offer fresh and creative visions as well as to bridge polarized theological stances." Editors are Michael A. King and Valerie Weaver-Zercher. Contact: contact@CascadiaPublishingHouse.com, 215-723-9125. Read free online at: www.CascadiaPublishingHouse.com/dsm/

The Work Is Thine, O Christ: In honor of Erland Waltner, edited by June Alliman Yoder. Institute of Mennonite Studies, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 2002. This Festschrift includes a summary of Erland's life and work, a collection of his writings, and a collection of his students' sermons. To purchase a copy for \$10 US, contact LaJane Yoder at AMBS, 574 296-6247 or lyoder@ambs.edu.

Faculty Opening:

English. Bluffton College has reopened its search for a tenure track position beginning in fall 2003. Candidates should have expertise in fiction writing and British Literature prior to the 18th century. Position includes some composition and other general education courses. Applicants with Ph.D. or M.F.A. preferred. Some publications (creative and/or academic) desirable. Rank and salary are commensurate with background and experience within the college pay scale. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until an appointment is made. For information see www.bluffton.edu. Send letter of interest, vita, three letters of reference (submitted directly from the referee), and official transcripts to Elaine Suderman, Administrative Assistant for Academic Affairs, Bluffton College, 280 West College Avenue, Bluffton, Ohio 45817-1196. EOE. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply.

Call for Papers:

"Contemporary Writers of Faith"

Conference on Christianity & Literature, Mideast Region,
Bluffton College, October 17-18, 2003.

Keynote Speakers:

Dale Brown, Calvin College, Topic: "Writing Out Faith"

Director of Calvin College's Festival of Faith and Writing; Author: *Of Fiction and Faith: Twelve American Writers Talk about Their Vision and Work*

Tim Gautreaux, Southeastern Louisiana University

Featured author: *Same Place, Same Things; The Next Step in the Dance; Welding with Children*

We invite proposals or completed papers (for a 10-15 minute reading time) focusing on the conference theme or on any topic that considers the intersection of Christianity and literature. We also encourage submissions of original fiction or poetry that reflects an engagement with issues of belief.

Send proposals or completed projects by **May 1, 2003** to

Lamar Nisly

Chair, English/Language Dept.

Box 1085

Bluffton College

Bluffton, OH 45817

419-358-3295

Or, via e-mail to nislyl@bluffton.edu

Conference website: www.bluffton.edu/eng/ccl2003

Conference participants should be active members of the Conference on Christianity and Literature. They may join when they register or at the Conference. Graduate and undergraduate students are encouraged to participate.

Conference:

"Ethics of Biotechnology: Viewing New Creations with Anabaptist Eyes"

This conference will be held **November 13-15, 2003**, at Eastern Mennonite University. It will bring authorities on issues related to genetic research and applications to campus for presentations on the theme. The Anabaptist Center for Health Care Ethics, Elkhart, Ind., and Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, Pa., are associate sponsors.

The conference will include case studies, panel discussions and opportunity for audience questions and responses. It is designed for students, faculty, health care professionals, bioresearchers, agriculturalists, pastors, educators, counselors and others who care about the power and use of new understandings in genetics.

Seven keynote speakers from various disciplines and perspectives will address the conference, including: Dr. John Gearhart, gynecology and obstetrics professor at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md.; Dr. LeRoy Walters, professor of Christian ethics at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Carole Cramer, professor of plant pathology and physiology, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; and Dr. Stanley Hauerwas, professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C.

Registration is \$140 with a special student rate of \$25. For more information or to register, call 540-432-4000 or visit the EMU web site at www.bioethics.emu.edu.

Ritual in Anabaptist Communities

An Interdisciplinary Conference

June 26-28, 2003

Dow Leadership Development Center
Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan

Sponsored by:

The Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network
The Anabaptist Sociology and Anthropology Association
Hillsdale College Department of Sociology

Registration Deadline: **June 1, 2003**

Conference Website: <http://www.hillsdale.edu/academics/soc/ritual.htm>

About the Conference:

Christian groups descended from the Anabaptist movement (Amish, Brethren, Hutterites, Mennonites) have developed relatively strong traditions of ritual, both in worship settings and in everyday life. Explicit reflection on the nature of ritual, however, has been avoided historically. There are various reasons for this avoidance, including the relative absence of systematic theological study and reflection, distrust of the formality of "higher-church" liturgies, resistance to distinguishing spaces, objects, or actions as sacred, and so forth.

This conference represents a growing interest among contemporary scholars, both of and within the Anabaptist tradition, in explicit study and reflection on ritual action. It is intended to bring together scholars from various academic disciplines with denominational and congregational leaders concerned about worship and other forms of ritual.

The conference will take place at the Dow Leadership Development Center, the conference center on the campus of Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan. Hillsdale is located in Southeastern Michigan. It is approximately a 1½ hour drive from any of the following: Detroit Metro Airport, Ann Arbor MI, Toledo OH, Goshen IN.

Featured plenary speakers include:

- **Irma Fast Dueck**, Assistant Professor of Practical Theology, Canadian Mennonite University. Her dissertation for Toronto School of Theology is entitled *A Critical Examination of Mennonite Worship & Ethics: A Praxis Approach*
- **Ronald Grimes**, Professor of Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University, founding editor of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*, and author of *Deeply Into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage*.

- **Ruth Krall**, Professor of Religion, Nursing, and Psychology, and Director of the Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies Program, Goshen College.
- **John Rempel**, Mennonite Central Committee, United Nations Office, author of *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, and editor of the 1998 *Minister's Manual* for the Mennonite Church USA.

Other presenters are scheduled for various concurrent sessions. See the list on the following page.

Lodging and Meals:

Lodging is available in an air-conditioned dormitory across the street from the conference center, at \$17 per night (charge is per person, not per room). This does not include linens. Dormitory lodging may be secured using the registration form included. Information on the Dow Center facilities and hotel accommodations is available at their website: <http://www.hillsdale.edu/dowcenter/>

Cafeteria meals will be available at the Curtis Dining Hall, adjoining the Dow Center. There will be a banquet with a full buffet on Friday evening.

Full information on lodging, meals, driving directions, airport shuttle is available on the conference website.

Financial Aid for Doctoral Students:

A bursary may be available to assist current doctoral students with conference expenses, possibly including registration, housing, and travel. If you are a current graduate student, and wish to apply for assistance, you may submit your registration form, omitting payment, and wait to be contacted by us when we know how much assistance is available. **To receive full consideration for assistance, you should submit your form before May 1st, 2003.** We will contact applicants regarding availability of funds by late May.

Ritual in Anabaptist Communities

Scheduled Presentations

(Subject to revision)

- “Amish Shunning: Rituals of Purification and Shaming,” Donald B. Kraybill & Amos Stoltzfus (Elizabethtown College)
- “Anthropological Perspectives on Anabaptist Ritual,” John M. Janzen (University of Kansas)
- “Communal Singing and Liturgical Reading as Strategic Resources for Mennonites,” Kerry Strayer (Otterbein College)
- “Communion as Strategic Practice,” Rebecca Slough (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary)
- “Doing What One Means: Wittgenstein on Ritual,” Phil Enns (Toronto School of Theology)
- “Escaping This World: A Pietistic And Buddhist Path To Spiritual Freedom,” Gay Lynn Voth (Columbia Bible College)
- “Harmonia Sacra / Sacred Harp: Mennonite and Southern Religious Experience in Shaped-Note Singing,” Jonathan Dueck (University of Alberta)
- “Healing and Wounding Rituals: Medical and Spiritual Practices in Dialogue,” Ruth Krall (Goshen College)
- “Heidegger’s Shoes and Beautiful Feet: Ritual as Artwork,” Peter C. Blum (Hillsdale College)
- “How ‘Sacramental’ Were the Original Anabaptists?” Tom Finger (Evanston, IL)
- “Jesus and Open Communion,” John Zimmerman (Union Theological Seminary, VA)
- “Laughing Through the Layers: A Glimpse into the Music at the Froese Family Gathering,” Judith Klassen (York University)
- “Mennonites and their Work: the Use of Narratives as a Daily Ritual,” Tomomi Naka (University of Iowa)
- “Performance, Narrative and Criticism in Ritual Studies,” Ronald Grimes (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- “Performing Mennonite Ritual as a Modern Agnostic and a Postmodern Church Member,” W. Benjamin Myers (Bowling Green State University)
- “Reading Between The Bites: Dissecting The Ritual Of Dinner Conversation In Bilingual Anabaptist Families,” Steve Hartman Keiser (Marquette University)
- “Ritual and Subjectivity,” Jeff Gundy (Bluffton College)
- “Ritual as My Third Language: An Anabaptist Journey,” John Rempel (MCC, United Nations Office)
- “Ritual Practices within Mennonite Church USA at the Turn of the Century,” Susan Biesecker-Mast (Bluffton College)
- “Ritual, Deviance And Social Control In Traditional Quaker Worship,” William Rushby (Blue Grass, VA)
- “The Meaning of Old Order Mennonite Ritual,” James P. Hurd (Bethel College, St. Paul)
- “The Mennonite Relief Sale: Restoring Festival to Mennonite Ritual,” Ervin Beck (Goshen College)
- “The Performance of Worship and the Ordering of our Lives: Liturgy and Ethics in the Mennonite Tradition,” Irma Fast Dueck (Canadian Mennonite University)
- “The Sacrament of the Sermon Within Anabaptist Worship” Ray Gingerich (Eastern Mennonite University)
- “The Witnessing Body in Anabaptist Ritual,” Gerald Biesecker-Mast (Bluffton College)
- “‘To Be or Not to Be:’ Baptism Decisions Among Amish Youth,” Lora Friedrich (Simpson College) & Joseph Donnermeyer (Ohio State University)
- “‘To Help us Think of God:’ Iconic versus Aniconic Mennonite Christmas and Easter in Kansas,” Reinhild Janzen (Washburn University)
- “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Gesture,” Scott Holland (Bethany Theological Seminary)
- “Water for a Barren Land: Worship Music Among Mennonites in East Freeman, South Dakota,” Stephanie Krehbiel (Michigan State University)