

ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE SCHOLARS NETWORK NEWSLET-

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The Amish, the Media and Me; or, What I Learned from “Amish in the City”

By David L. Weaver-Zercher

“I’m really not a scholar of Amish life. I’m more interested in the English and *their* interest in the Amish.” That’s usually what I tell journalists who contact me about the Amish and their way of life.

To be sure, those phone calls don’t come very often, but when they do, I try to beg off, passing along contact information for my Messiah College colleague Rich Stevick (who knows about more Amish youth culture than anyone—and ever since the “Amish drug bust” of 1998, Amish youth culture has been *the* hot Amish topic in the mainstream media) or Donald Kraybill or Steve Nolt or Diane Zimmerman Umble. I’m neither being Anabaptistically modest nor giving them the ol’ Amish runaround: I really don’t know much more about Amish life than what I have learned from books and articles written by others. If the caller won’t take no for an answer, I’ll saunter over to my bookshelf and read from one of Nolt’s or Kraybill’s books. How’s that for mediating to the media?

Given my own scholarly work, I’m more comfortable when someone calls to ask about the latest Amish-themed media venture. That happened this past summer, when the Amish family that now owns the farm where *Witness* was filmed agreed to host twentieth anniversary tours for people enchanted with Amish life. Or were the visitors enchanted with director Peter Weir’s vision of Amish life? Or perhaps even Harrison Ford and Kelly McGillis? In any case, I couldn’t help but recall Daniel Boorstin’s rant against the “pseudo-events” that have come to dominate late modern America (Boorstin, 1964)—in this case tourists finding sustenance by visiting a farm where a cinematic representation of Amish life had been produced twenty years earlier.

The most I’ve been queried by the media, however,

was in August 2004, at the time UPN launched its reality series, “Amish in the City.” The series, which placed five Amish youth in a Beverly Hills mansion with five city kids to see whether the Amish could resist Southern California’s hippest allures, spawned criticism from a wide array of sources, ranging from the Center for Rural Strategies to Congressman Joe Pitts (R-Pa.) to Donald Kraybill. From their perspective, UPN was both ridiculing Amish life and spawning misunderstandings about it, not to mention exploiting the five young people involved.

Depending on the media source, I too was a vigorous critic of the series. In one article, for instance, I condemned the show for depicting the Amish youth as people eager to “shed their weirdness and become cool.” Later in the same article, I complained that the show failed to offer “a meaningful portrait of what it’s like to be Amish.” But in at least one other media venue, I came across as a supporter of the series: “The Amish come off as much more deep and kind. [The series premier] reflects positively on the Amish and shows how rude a bus-

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boy from Boston can be.” So let me ask the question before you do: would the real David Weaver-Zercher please stand up?

Of course, many of you reading this article have had similar experiences. In neither of these cases above was I misquoted, but in both cases I was selectively quoted to sustain the writer’s narrative thread and buttress his or her overall argument. The fact is, I did not find “Amish in the City” to be particularly threatening to Amish life, nor did I find it, on the whole, to be treating Amish people and their culture disrespectfully. At the same time, I felt that the Amish young people involved were being exploited in a way they could not have imagined beforehand, and their respective faith journeys were trivialized by the media spectacle that they had unwittingly (at least to some degree) enabled. Although my views in this regard were not particularly unique, let alone complex, they nonetheless contained more nuance than was suggested by any of media stories that cited me. Maybe someday I’ll be famous enough to be granted a full-page interview on issues such as these, but until then I need to remind myself that my phone interviews will be boiled down to an engaging quip here and an apt quotation there.

Should I be party to that process? To be honest, my experience with “Amish in the City” made me sympathize with Harvard University’s Robert Orsi who, as Gerald Biesecker-Mast wrote in the Spring 2005 issue of *A-MSN Newsletter*, now refuses to talk with the media. According to Orsi, the popular media is so oriented around sound-bite storytelling, and so beholden to corporate power, that academics cannot offer their perspectives without running the risk of having those views corrupted (Orsi, 2004).

If the “Amish in the City” news stories weren’t evidence enough of this possibility, my experience with the Harrisburg, Pa., UPN affiliate was even more convincing. Wanting to demonstrate, or at least feign, sensitivity to the Lancaster County Amish community, the local affiliate agreed to delay the series’ first episode until it received counsel from a panel of “experts.” I showed up at the studio as an invited guest, expecting a roundtable discussion with a few key decision-makers and other relatively disinterested guests. To my surprise, there was only one other academic present; the majority of people in the room were UPN employees, including a cameraman who filmed our discussion for the five o’clock news (yes, that’s Daniel Boorstin rolling over in his grave). Before long I could tell that the station manager really appreciated my comments that tended in the quasi-positive direction—his enthusiastic head-nodding gave him away—and that he basically ignored the reservations I expressed. I left the meeting with the distinct feeling that I had just participated in a charade. I was not sur-

prised when the program aired locally the following evening.

Perhaps I would have been helped had the Spring 2005 issue of *A-MSN Newsletter* appeared before my conversation with UPN officials. In that issue, Randolph Haluza-DeLay cautions readers that we “need to know the conventions under which the media operates” and proceeds to observe that “the tentativeness with which academics speak . . . plays poorly in the media and can be dismissed by other interests.” My experience at UPN proved his point precisely and, in retrospect, I was chagrined by my lack of media savvy. Still, I remain uncertain about what I might have done differently. I have argued elsewhere that scholars and advocates operate out of different paradigms, that scholars are committed to truth-telling in all its complexity (which, in my experience, often entails “tentativeness”) whereas advocates are committed to accomplishing the end for which they advocate (Weaver-Zercher, 2005). Although these two postures are not necessarily incompatible, they often are. Indeed, most advocates I know are not particularly interested in telling the truth in all of its complexity lest that complexity detract from their desired ends. Conversely, devotion to communicating the world’s complexity, the very thing that scholars should be about, has been known to severely undermine one’s authority in the public sphere (case in point: the “failed” presidency of Jimmy Carter).

It is here, I believe, where Gerald Biesecker-Mast’s contribution to the Spring 2005 *A-MSN Newsletter* provides the proper degree of both hopefulness and skepticism. On the hopeful side, Biesecker-Mast notes the work of John A. Hostetler, whose Amish scholarship has shaped perceptions of the Amish that continue even today, over half a century after he first began to write. Hostetler is perhaps best known for his scholarly work, *Amish Society*, but he also cast his message about the Amish in popular forms (e.g., *Amish Life*) and in various other ways sought to communicate his message about the Amish through the media available to him. Significantly, Hostetler even took it upon himself to censure, and occasionally censor, others’ representations that he felt belittled Amish culture. Concerned that these other messages might do real harm to real-life Amish people, Hostetler worked hard to diminish their influence, above all by producing his own representations of Amish life that recognized, respected, and *reached* his various publics. And if influence is the mark of successful scholarship, Hostetler succeeded, wildly.

I have chronicled Hostetler’s mediating work in a recent book, *Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler* (Weaver-Zercher, 2005). It is important to note that my analysis of his work is not without criticism. For instance, I have never been convinced that *Witness* was

the threat or the insult to Amish society that Hostetler claimed it to be. Moreover, I have noted occasions when Hostetler's ends, praiseworthy though they were, compelled him to oversimplify complex realities and revise some of his own rules of mediation (e.g., his early-career commitment to honor the Amish taboo against photography). Still, I would support Biesecker-Mast's contention that Hostetler belongs in the tradition of public spokespersons who have helped Anabaptist communities survive in a hostile world. It is no coincidence that the Amish's rise to iconic status on the American cultural landscape coincided with Hostetler's career. He was not solely responsible for that ascent, nor would he wholly endorse it, but he did provide a narrative framework that facilitated widespread respect for the Amish and their ways.

The irony, of course, is that this widespread valorization of Amish life has helped to catalyze media interest in the less seemly and/or more titillating aspects of Amish life. The cocaine bust of 1998, the frenzied barn parties in the 2002 documentary *Devil's Playground*, even the *rum-springa*-like endeavors in "Amish in the City"—these activities might have been "newsworthy" in and of themselves, but they are *much more so* in the context of the Amish's iconic status as virtuous, family-oriented throwbacks to America's rural past. (Imagine if you can a reality series entitled "Methodists in the City," in which five Methodist teens weigh the possibility of remaining faithful to their church's teachings—not exactly a winning formula for high television ratings). And therein lies the rub: once the culturally eccentric Amish became highly renowned and highly regarded (again, in part due to Hostetler's work), it was only a matter of time until a few enterprising mediators discovered "the rest of the story." From what I've seen, these mediators almost always introduce their presentations with the mythic Amish, then quickly proceed to deconstruct that myth by telling the "untold" story. It's not exactly a novel approach to storytelling, but it's a popular one, especially when flavored with sex or drugs or, better yet, a little of both.

Which brings us to Biesecker-Mast's less hopeful side of scholars' involvement with the media. Biesecker-Mast calls it the scholars' posture of "vulnerable witness," the recognition that one's witness in public spheres will often be misunderstood, misconstrued, and perhaps even despoiled by those who hear and (re)mediate it. I have already noted my own experience in that regard, though I must admit that my experiences in popular venues are quite limited and relatively tame. For John Hostetler, however, who spent much of his career narrating an accessible message about Amish life, this posture of vulnerable witness was something he assumed almost every day. At certain points in his career (I've seen the corre-

Editor's note:

*The current issue continues the theme of "Scholars and the Media" introduced in the Spring 2005 issue (available online at www.AnabaptistScholars.net) with articles by Gerald Biesecker-Mast and Randolph Haluza-Delay. These authors developed theoretical frameworks within which Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars may be encouraged to extend their insights beyond the controlled spheres of classroom and academic journal but also why such risk may even be consistent with nonviolent, embodied witness to the world. In the present issue, contributors take as their points of departure personal experiences of interaction with radio or television media. I invited David L. Weaver-Zercher to reflect on this theme in light of his expertise on the representation of the Amish in the media and his experience of being called on to interpret not only this representation, but also the Amish themselves (p. 1-4). Sandra F. Joireman's expertise in international politics provides frequent opportunities for media appearances, and often on issues with life and death consequences (p. 5-6). While both recount some degree of misrepresentation or "being used," neither conclude that Mennonite academics ought to withdraw from such opportunities for engagement. I plan to continue with this topic for one more issue. **Contributions are welcome that either reflect on concrete experiences or develop more theoretical approaches.***

—Jeremy M. Bergen

spondence), he decided he had said and written just about enough about the Amish—tired, perhaps, of seeing what others were doing with his witness.

In fact, that time never came. Perhaps Hostetler held the same view on this issue as Gerald Biesecker-Mast, who argues that assuming "a nonviolent posture of vulnerable witness," however painful or infuriating it might be, is ultimately the right thing for those who follow Jesus and seek to love the world. In any case, the two would concur that we should not allow the difficulties attendant in popular communication to drive us into retreat. To the contrary, we should search for creative ways to share our insights in accessible ways, always tempering our assertions with love.

I agree with that view, though perhaps the more important question is this: what relevance does Biesecker-Mast's posture of vulnerable witness have for my experience with UPN and "Amish in the City"? The wrong conclusion for me to draw would be that I wasn't really "naïve" in my dealings with UPN, I was just "vulnerable." That, in my opinion, lets me off the hook too easily and dismisses my need to learn. Like other

scholars who spend their waking hours sequestered in the academy, I am largely ignorant of corporate and media realities. Next time around I hope I would be wise as a serpent—or at least a tad bit wiser than I was in the summer of 2004. Perhaps, too, I would be more courageous, producing an opinion piece that presented my best thinking in an accessible form. That, I maintain, would be a vulnerable undertaking, for in addition to demanding precious time for something that might not see the light of day, it would entail a public declaration of my thoughts on the matter.

Given the range of terrifying things in this world, to deem writing an opinion piece a “courageous” and “vulnerable” undertaking may sound presumptuous. Perhaps it is. Still, most of us would agree that presenting our best thinking in 750 words or less, *sans* the scholarly armor of footnotes and long sentences, places us in a vulnerable position, opening us to criticism by others whose affirmation we crave. Indeed, to know that our witness will be widely read and publicly engaged places us in the same position as church’s most able preachers—and we all know how vulnerable *they* can be when they endeavor to speak the truth in loving, accessible ways. It is hard to begrudge the scholars among us who have forsworn such a vulnerable undertaking. At the same time, the church and the world are richer for those who embrace it.

David L. Weaver-Zercher is Associate Professor of American Religious History at Messiah College, Grantham, PA. dzercher@messiah.edu

Sources Cited:

Boorstin, Daniel. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in American Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Orsi, Robert A. “On Not Talking to the Press.” *Religious Studies News* 19/2 (May 2004): 15.

Weaver-Zercher, David. *Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler*. University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2005.

Transitions

Chad M. Bauman has been appointed assistant professor in Asian Religions (tenure track) at Butler University, Indianapolis, IN.

Jeremy M. Bergen has been appointed interim director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, beginning July 2005.

David Kratz Mathies has been appointed to a one-year term as assistant professor of religion at Eastern Men-

Mennonite Scholars & Friends at the AAR/SBL

Philadelphia, PA 2005

Host: Canadian Mennonite University

Reception: Friday, November 18, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Loews Philadelphia Hotel

Room: Commonwealth D

Forum: Saturday, November 19, 9:00–11:30 a.m.

Loews Philadelphia Hotel

Room: Congress B

Theme: “**Paul, Empire, and Political Philosophy**”

In the past number of years, the name of Paul has begun to emerge in what might seem an unusual place—the world of European political philosophy. In particular, Paul is enlisted to help bolster a meaningful sense of resistance to empire in its various guises. Drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben, Alan Badiou, Stanislas Breton, Jacob Taubes, and Slavoj Zizek, this panel brings together theologians and biblical scholars to engage recent discussions about Paul and politics.

Chris K. Huebner, Canadian Mennonite University, presiding

P. Travis Kroeker, McMaster University

Laura Brenneman, Bluffton University

Alex Sider, Duke University

Gordon Zerbe, Canadian Mennonite University

Travis Kroeker will present a synopsis of a longer paper that sets a context for the discussion that will follow. The full paper may be found at: www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/tmtc/kroeker.pdf

At the forum, there will be a brief discussion of the future of the Mennonite Scholars & Friends reception and forum in light of the decision of the AAR to meet separately from the SBL starting in 2008.

On Voice and the Responsibility of Knowing

By Sandra Fullerton Joireman

In the last issue of the newsletter Jeremy Bergen issued a call for Mennonite scholars to reflect on specific experiences of communicating through the public media. As a political scientist with specialization in development, institutions and ethnic conflict I have had a number of opportunities to do both television and radio commentary. These have not been particularly welcome experiences for me as I am an academic recluse by nature. However, I continue to engage the media as a public intellectual out of both a sense of obligation and a sense of calling.

Perhaps my strong feelings about my role as a “public intellectual” are based in my discipline. As a political scientist my work has a significant chance of influencing political events, more so than if I were a scholar of literature or philosophy. Moreover, I also have an opportunity to give voice to those people in the world who have none. This imbues my work with a sense of accountability. I may not feel Robert Orsi’s “gulf between the world of proper academic inquiry and the realm of mass-mediated journalism” so profoundly because I see both how the media can use intellectuals and how intellectuals can use the media.

As a Mennonite, I also believe that I have been able to make a unique and irenic contribution to the public square. It is possible to frame responses to questions from reporters in ways which provide a constructive understanding or approach to specific situations. For example, I was asked to comment on the upsurge in violence in the West Bank in 2002 in several different media contexts. My goal in agreeing to the interviews was to articulate the view that any solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would be political and not military. This was at a time in which both sides were invoking language of security and terrorism to explain their actions and violence was being used by both sides. In a radio interview, which was broadcast across a network of stations in the US, I was able to get my main point across and to make an implicit endorsement of nonviolent approaches in a context in which my academic voice lent credibility to the position of constructive engagement. Pursuing the same agenda, I also agreed to offer commentary on a Chicago-based television news program. I talked at length with the interviewer before going on camera and was shocked when the interview began to find him making statements that I had made to him a few minutes earlier, using my words as if they were his own and then asking me to comment! I was in the unenviable position of simply having to agree with him or point out on air what he

was doing, so I chose the more politic route. From my perspective that interview was a failure, not just because I was so uncomfortable with it, but because ultimately I was not able to speak what I felt was my main contribution to the discussion – an emphasis on political negotiation rather than military crackdown. In that encounter the interviewer became my competition in a deeply unsettling way and I became unwillingly complicit in his personal aggrandizement and perhaps ultimately in the struggle for network market share. I lost control over the use of my image and the message I wanted to convey. This experience gives me a kind of sympathy for Orsi’s position. Yet, I still think it is self-indulgent to remove oneself from the popular discussion because the media either can not or will not get it right.

Often there is some degree of personal risk in engaging the media. Whenever one does any kind of piece that is taped there is a loss of control over the end result. I had a particularly disturbing experience of this doing an interview on the Rwandan genocide courts with a relatively famous National Public Radio interviewer. It was a half hour interview that was taped with the intent of later splicing it together into a five to ten minute piece. The questions I was asked followed no particular order, so there was no element of conversation in the interview. At the end of the recording, it was unclear what would eventually be aired. My greatest fear was that my words would be twisted in such a way as to either impede understanding of the post-genocide political problems in Rwanda, or worse yet, that they would actually provide some fuel for the ethnic conflict there. When the interview was aired it sounded fine, but I had about five days of intense soul-searching about the intersection of my research, my faith and the media between the time it was taped and the time it was aired. I came to the conviction that whatever the result might be, I have an obligation to give witness to what I have seen and what I know, particularly when my witness might play a role in bringing peace or building the church.

I cannot control how the media will use my image, my words and my ideas. However, I know that God has put me where I am and gifted me with an excellent education, opportunities to write and reflect, safety in my public expression and the academic credentials to make me an “authority.” I cannot in good conscience dictate how God will use me in this world. It would be sin for me to refuse to use these gifts God has given me.

Moreover, those of us who live in North America have another role to play. The safety of public expression guaranteed to scholars in North America is a gift that

can be used by the global church. Our brothers and sisters around the world can be brutally punished for speaking out publicly about their beliefs and opinions. One need only think of the Mennonite Church in Zimbabwe or Vietnam and the persecution of anyone criticizing the government there, or even reporting truthfully on what is happening in the country, to understand what a gift we have in our freedom of speech.

For Anabaptist and Mennonite scholars the call is clear. If we believe we have a particular insight into the

nature of God and the world that he has created, then this needs to be shared - all the more so since we are a minority voice. The media can assist us in conveying the message of God's truth and grace to the world.

Sandra F. Joireman is Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. Sandra.F.Joireman@wheaton.edu

Events, Conferences, Announcements

John and Margaret Friesen Lectures in Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies, **November 9 - 10, 2005**, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, MB. Dr. Peter J. Klassen (professor emeritus of History at California State University, Fresno) will explore the topic of the **history of Mennonites in Poland and Prussia** from 1535 to 1793.

The **Association of Anabaptist-Mennonite Missiologists** (AAM) will meet at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN, **November 11 - 12, 2005**.

www.ambs.edu/php/special/spe_AAMmeeting.php

In connection with this, AMBS is launching a mission lectureship series which we anticipate will be an annual event. Our keynote lecturer is Wilbert R. Shenk, who has just retired from teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies. Other presenters at this conference will be Jaime Preito Valladares, David Shenk, Walter Sawatsky, Berhard Ott, and Andrew Walls. The conference will conclude on Saturday evening with a banquet honoring Wilbert Shenk's major contributions to mission and missiology.

Prior to the conference, on Thursday evening, November 10, and Friday morning, November 11, Mennonite Historical Society is sponsoring a colloquium on Mennonite History and Missional Church. Speakers at this colloquium will be Lois Barrett, Art McPhee, Stanley Green, Alan Kreider.

The Canadian Mennonite University Winter Lectures, **January 30 - 31, 2006**. Dr. Alvin Dueck, Evelyn and Frank Freed Professor of the Integration of Psychology and Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary will focus on questions at the intersection of **psychology and Christian theology**.

Women in Ministry Conference

The Bluffton University Pathways to Mission and Vocation project, with generous funding by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., will host a conference for women in ministry, *Secure on the Soil: Cultivating Wholeness*, **March 16 - 18, 2006** on the Bluffton campus. The keynote speaker

will be Dr. Margaret Zipse Kornfeld, author of *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities*. Though the conference's central audience is Mennonite women, it is open to women of all faith backgrounds. Contact Susan Collier at 419-358-3435 or colliers@bluffton.edu for registration information.

A **Youth Ministry Symposium** will be held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN, **March 22 - 24, 2006**. The title of the event is "Youth and the Passionate Church." Keynote speaker is Kendra Creasy Dean, Princeton Theological Seminary. The symposium will be held in conjunction with the AMBS Theological Lectureship and is presented in partnership with Goshen College, Canadian Mennonite University, and others. For more information, see: www.ambs.edu/ymsymposium or email: ymsymposium@ambs.edu.

The **Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies** at Elizabethtown College, PA welcomes applications for appointments for resident Fellows with research projects related to Anabaptist and Pietist Studies for fall 2006 and spring 2007. Applications are welcome from both established scholars and doctoral students. Send inquires to David Eller, Director at ellerdb@etown.edu

The Young Center welcomes nominations for the 2006 **Dale Brown Book Award** for Outstanding Scholarship In Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Books published in 2003, 2004, and 2005 are eligible. Deadline for nominations is December 1, 2005. For more information visit the Young Center's website: www.etown.edu/youngctr

Research Notes

Traveling the Tradition II: an Orthodox-Mennonite Discussion

A discussion between Mennonite and Eastern Orthodox Christians, the second in history in the United States, so far as anyone knows, took place in Reading, PA on April 15-16, 2005. "Traveling the Tradition II," held in James Street Mennonite Church, drew about 50 participants, approximately half from each group. "Traveling the Tradition I," the first-ever such gathering, convened in the same city in March, 2004.

These second conversations centered around three sessions on "The Body of Christ," or the Church. Each session opened with remarks from an Orthodox and a Mennonite perspective, followed by general discussion. Sessions on "The Church and the Incarnation" and "The Church and Authority," were led by Demetrius Nicoloudakis, Priest of St. Matthew's Greek Orthodox Church in Reading, and Tom Finger, Mennonite theologian from Evanston, IL. A session on "The Church and Community," we guided by Patrick Tutella (Orthodox), Chaplain from Berks County Prison in Reading, and Paul Zehr, theologian and retired Mennonite bishop from Lancaster.

Much of the discussion took place among 5-8 participants gathered around tables. These, along with a Lenten luncheon on Saturday and unscheduled time, provided opportunity for personal acquaintance and interaction. Worship times were very central to the gathering, and generally alternated Mennonite and Orthodox formats. Multiple hymns were sung at some, and extensive liturgies chanted at others. Despite the differences between these forms of expression, participants noticed that their contents and basic themes were often similar.

At first glance, it may seem surprising that this novel, mutual interest among the Orthodox, who are often considered far distant from Mennonites, and Mennonites has sprung up in Lancaster, often regarded as a very tradition bound Mennonite area. This may indicate how very little these two traditions know about each other, and suggest that many hidden riches may await mutual exploration.

In all likelihood, interest in this exploration exists in other parts of the country, but largely among scattered individuals and groups unacquainted with each other. The challenge now is to find ways of identifying and bringing them together-- a large task for those who organized this excellent conference, but who already invest many hours in their pastorates and other vocations.

Unofficial report, submitted by Thomas Finger
fingert@sisna.com

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A group of Eastern Mennonite University faculty from a cross-section of departments has formed Shenandoah Anabaptist Science Society (SASS) for constructive engagement of science and religion. The project has received grants from the Metanexus Institute Local Societies Initiative (www.metanexus.net), and the John Templeton Foundation.

Funds will be used to support ongoing study and discussion groups, bring outside speakers on the subject to campus, support publications that emerge from the group's work, organize conferences and provide other forms of outreach in the larger Shenandoah Valley area. SASS will provide resources and a formal context to encourage the integration of Christian faith - particularly in its Anabaptist expression and convictions concerning peacemaking and service.

For more information, contact Ann G. Hershberger, EMU nursing department, hershbea@emu.edu or Kenton T. Derstine, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, derstine@emu.edu.

* * *

Chris Huebner, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics at Canadian Mennonite University, and Gordon Zerbe, Associate Professor of New Testament at CMU, have secured a research grant from the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. They will participate in a five-person research team, led by King's University College, to examine "Saint Paul's Secular Destinies: A Critical Engagement," an engagement of recent continental philosophers.

* * *

I am writing a book for Eerdmans on "a social-historical and gender analysis of communal meals in Acts 2:42-47 and 6:1-6." I am arguing for the historical plausibility of daily communal meals in the context of a community of goods where there were no needy people in the early Jerusalem church. This pattern, I believe, was continued in various adaptations for many years in the early church, where the Lord's Supper was a full meal where spiritual, social, and physical needs were met across class lines. My last chapter will include examples in the church today where communal meals are a vehicle for merging the sacramental, social, and care of those in need. Please send some examples!

Reta Halteman Finger
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Research Notes, continued

I just came back from Duesseldorf, Germany where I participated in the conference on "Interfaith Pastoral Care & Counseling." Together with Leah Dawn Bueckert (M. Div. candidate from Winnipeg, MB) I presented a workshop on "Interfaith Communication in Spiritual Caregiving: Insights from Chaplaincy and Pastoral Counseling". I also led a workshop on "Intercultural Reading of the Bible. Implications for Pastoral Care." Leah Dawn and I are also collaborating as co-researchers and editors for a

binational (Canada and USA) research and writing project, "Spiritual Caregiving in the Hospital: Windows to Chaplaincy Ministry". For information please see our web page:

www.ambs.edu/php/chaplaincy/chap_index.php

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Books

Wilma Ann Bailey. *"You Shall Not Kill" or "You Shall Not Murder": The Assault on a Biblical Text.* Liturgical Press, 2005.

Duane K. Friesen and Gerald W. Schlabach, eds. *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security and the Wisdom of the Cross.* Herald Press, 2005. Essays emerging from a 2-year research project commissioned by Mennonite Central Committee.

Graydon Snyder. *The People Are Holy: The History And Theology of Free Church Worship.* Mercer University Press, 2005.

Willard M. Swartley. *Covenant of Peace: Restoring the Neglected Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics.* Eerdmans, forthcoming.

Willard M. Swartley, ed.; Jürgen Moltmann, author. *Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Lectures and Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars.* Wipf & Stock, 2005.

David L. Weaver-Zercher and William H. Willimon, eds. *Vital Christianity: Spirituality, Justice, And Christian Practice.* T & T Clark, 2005.

The Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College is pleased to announce a new series of books published by the Johns Hopkins University Press to be known as **Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies.** Series co-editors are Donald B. Kraybill and David Eller. For more information contact one of the series editors: kraybill@etown.edu or ellerdb@etown.edu

Faculty and other positions

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) seeks a couple for a one- to three-year assignment in Qom, Iran as part of an exchange to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The goal is to gain understanding of each other's religion and to promote friendship between Iranians and North Americans. Interest in studying Islam and Farsi are essential. Membership in a Mennonite or Brethren in Christ church and a degree in biblical or religious study are preferred. Besides studying Islam and Farsi, this couple will respond to invitations to speak about Christianity and will represent MCC to the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran Institute and other MCC partners in Iran. For more information and job description for "**Muslim/Christian Exchange, Iran**" contact Marilyn Langeman mjl@mcc.org, phone 717-859-1151, x258.

Mennonite Central Committee seeks English teachers with theological training to teach English to university students at the State Institute for Islamic Studies in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and to be members of the MCC team there, responding to the tsunami. A Master's degree is required for visa purposes; a couple is preferred for this three-year assignment. For more information and job description for "**English/Theology teachers**" contact Marilyn Langeman mjl@mcc.org, phone 717-859-1151, x258.

Lithuania Christian College, a Christian liberal arts college located in Klaipeda, Lithuania, announces an opening in **Missiology** for August, 2006. This position would involve teaching undergraduate courses in missions, world religions, and faith and contemporary culture. We are especially interested in candidates who have experience or research interests in missions in an eastern European context. Hiring preference will be given to applicants with a doctoral degree and willingness to make a multi-year commitment. LCC operates on an externally funded support model, so applicants should be willing to explore financial support possibilities from mission agencies, churches, friends and family contacts. Teachers looking for a challenging sabbatical experience are also welcome to apply. Our theology faculty come from a variety of Christian traditions, and are expected to be committed Christian believers who can teach in an ecumenically sensitive manner. Send application letter and CV to sclark@lcc.lt. For more information go to our website at www.lcc.lt.

Lecturer in **Theology**. **Messiah College's** Department of Biblical and Religious Studies invites applications for a full-time lecturer position beginning August 2006. Master's degree in theology required, Ph.D. preferred. Responsibilities include teaching (general education theology courses and participation in the college's interdisciplinary core course and/or first-year seminar program) and academic advising. Evidence of strong commitment to excellent teaching of undergraduates in the liberal arts tradition is expected. Messiah College is a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences located near Harrisburg, PA. The College is committed to an embracing evangelical spirit rooted in Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian church. Women and minority candidates encouraged to apply. EOE. Send a cover letter explaining your teaching interests and abilities, a detailed curriculum vitae, transcripts, a brief description of courses prepared to teach, and three letters of recommendation to Dr. David Weaver-Zercher, Chair, Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Box 3053, Messiah College, One College Avenue, Grantham, PA, 17027. Review of applications begins November 1, 2005; preliminary interviews will be scheduled for the AAR/SBL Annual Meetings in Philadelphia.

Lecturer in **Biblical Studies**. **Messiah College's** Department of Biblical and Religious Studies invites applications for a full-time lecturer position beginning August 2006. Master's degree in biblical studies required, Ph.D. preferred. Responsibilities include teaching (general education Bible courses and participation in the college's interdisciplinary core course and/or first-year seminar program) and academic advising. Evidence of strong commitment to excellent teaching of undergraduates in the liberal arts tradition is expected. Messiah College is a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences located near Harrisburg, PA. The College is committed to an embracing evangelical spirit rooted in Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian church. Women and minority candidates encouraged to apply. EOE. Send a cover letter explaining your teaching interests and abilities, a detailed curriculum vitae, transcripts, a brief description of courses prepared to teach, and three letters of recommendation to Dr. David Weaver-Zercher, Chair, Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Box 3053, Messiah College, One College Avenue, Grantham, PA, 17027. Review of applications begins November 1, 2005; preliminary interviews will be scheduled for the AAR/SBL Annual Meetings in Philadelphia.

MB Biblical Seminary announces a Faculty Position in **Marriage and Family Therapy**. MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno California is the main campus for the MB Biblical Seminary. Other campuses are in Langley, British Columbia and Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The MBBS campus in Fresno is adjacent to Fresno Pacific University. The Seminary shares library facilities and resources with the University. The MFT program has 35 students, three full-time faculty and clinical staff, two part time instructors and several adjuncts. It is one of seven degree programs offered by MBBS in Fresno. The MFT program has 35 students, three full-time faculty and clinical staff, two part time instructors and several adjuncts. It is one of seven degree programs offered by MBBS in Fresno. The successful candidate must: demonstrate competence in marriage and family therapy, integration of the academic disciplines of theology and social sciences, and the practices of pastoral counseling; agree with the MB Biblical Seminary Mission and Identity statements, including the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith. Preference will be given to those who have a completed doctorate in a discipline related to marriage and family therapy or clinical psychology; are, or are eligible to be, licensed in California; have experience counseling individuals, couples, families and children; have teaching experience at the undergraduate or graduate level; have graduate theological training; have experience with spiritual direction; have experience living and working in a multi-cultural setting. Start date: Summer 2006. This faculty position will be at the Assistant or Associate Professor level. It is a continuing appointment with an initial two-year term. Send inquiries or resumes to Chris Patton, Academic Dean's Assistant, by November 15, 2005. 4824 E. Butler Ave, Fresno CA, 93727, (559) 452-1710 or cpatton@mbseminary.edu

Fresno Pacific University, a fully accredited private Christian university in California's Central Valley, seeks to fill several full-time faculty positions. FPU is known for its academic excellence and strong sense of community, and serves a diverse population of religious, ethnic and national traditions. See the FPU website at www.fresno.edu/dept/personnel for the Announcement of Vacancy and a downloadable application form.

Faculty in **Psychology**

Faculty in **School Psychology**

Faculty in **Spanish/Latin American Literature and Culture**

Faculty in **Business**

Bluffton University invites applications for the following full-time tenure-track faculty positions to begin fall 2006:

Accounting & Information Systems: Academic preparation in accounting and/or information systems required, as well as capability and willingness to bridge both fields. A terminal degree (Ph.D. or functional equivalent) will be required for tenure. Completing this degree after employment is acceptable. Candidates who are closely linked to accounting and have an MBA and CPA will be considered. Responsibilities: Teach in the areas of accounting and information systems, with some flexibility in course load depending on the candidate's expertise. Teaching at graduate and undergraduate level is expected.

Church Music & Choral Conducting: Proven excellence in church music leadership and choral conducting. Strong preference for candidate to have doctorate (or near completion) in church music or choral conducting, will consider with masters. Demonstrated excellence in university-level teaching preferred. Anabaptist/Mennonite commitment desirable. Responsibilities: Conduct at least one of four choirs, teach undergraduate courses in church music and worship. Possible other areas: Teach music history, music appreciation, applied lessons in area of expertise, or direct musical.

English/TESOL: Ph.D. in rhetoric/composition, linguistics, or English (ABD will be considered), with advanced degree in TESOL. Background/experience in public school teaching desirable. Responsibilities: Direct growing TESOL program (minor and education endorsement), teach TESOL and language courses, composition, and general education courses, including possible involvement in active cross-cultural program.

Psychology: Ph.D., ABD, or international equivalent required upon appointment. Evidence of excellence in teaching and ability and interest in mentoring students. Areas of specialization are open but preference will be given to candidates with interests in industrial-organizational, cross-cultural, applied social or community psychology. Responsibilities: Teach a variety of courses in the major, and in the general education program. Opportunities may exist to teach in Peace and Conflict studies, bachelor's degree completion and master's program in Organizational Management.

Religion/Theology: Ph.D. required (ABD considered). Specialization in Theology. The successful applicant will be a creative theologian deeply rooted in the Anabaptist and Mennonite traditions, history and theology. Commitment to these ideals as realized in Bluffton University's mission is essential. Responsibilities: Teach a variety of undergraduate theology courses. Expected to contribute to the general education and adult degree completion programs. Ability to teach in the area of Liberation Theology, broadly considered, is desirable (Womanist Theology, Political Theology, Economic Theology, Theologies attentive to World Religions). Participation in scholarly and churchly activity expected.

Social Work: MSW degree from an accredited social work program and minimum of two years of practice experience is required. Ph.D. or ABD preferred. Should have or be eligible for Ohio's practice license at Licensed Independent Social Worker level. Demonstrate effective teaching skills and experience. International experience is a plus. Responsibilities: Teach a range of introductory, human behavior social environment, mezzo-practice, human diversity, and policy courses, as well as occasional general education course. Serve as director of fieldwork activities, placing students for spring semester internships, and providing orientation for new field instructors. Scholarship is supported and service activities with community/church are encouraged.

Review of applications begins November 15 and continues until an appointment is made. Compensation for these positions is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Send letter of interest, resume or curriculum vita, three letters of reference (submitted directly from referee or if necessary from placement office), and official transcripts to Elaine Suderman, Academic Affairs, Bluffton University, 1 University Drive, Bluffton, OH 45817-2104. See www.bluffton.edu. Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified persons who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Calls for Papers

Mennonite Graduate Student Conference

The third Mennonite Graduate Student Conference, sponsored by Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC), is soliciting proposals from Mennonite graduate students for individual presentations, panel discussions, or entire sessions on the theme of "Exclusion". The conference is to be held June 11 - 13 2006 at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), in Elkhart, IN following the AMBS conference entitled "Holding Fast to the Confession of Our Hope: The *Confession of Faith* Ten Years Later."

The primary purpose of the Mennonite Graduate Student Conference is to provide Mennonite graduate students, particularly doctoral students, an opportunity to present their academic research in a collegial interdisciplinary context. Therefore, participation of students from a wide variety of disciplines is encouraged (e.g. Philosophy, English, Sociology, Psychology, Peace Studies, Religion, Theology, Biblical Studies, Ethics, History).

Possible topics: exclusion of texts; exclusion of voices/interpreters; exclusion of interlocutors; exclusion and community; exclusion and ideas; exclusion and the human experience. This list is not exhaustive and all proposals on the general theme will be considered.

Proposals: should be kept to 350 words; should include degree and area of study information for each presenter involved; should be sent to mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca before **January 15, 2006**.

We anticipate offering travel bursaries to presenters and to other participants.

The planning committee consists of Derek Suderman (Toronto School of Theology), Susan Kennel Harrison (Toronto School of Theology), Paul Heidebrecht (Marquette University), Joel Schmidt (University of Notre Dame), Jonathan Slater (Toronto School of Theology), Allan Rudy-Froese (Toronto School of Theology).

Conference website: www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/tmtc/gradconf.shtml

Mennonite/s Writing: Beyond Borders

Bluffton University, October 26 - 29, 2006

Keynote: Kathleen Norris. Featured writers and critics: Rudy Wiebe, Jean Janzen, John Ruth, Di Brandt, Julia Kasdorf, Hildi Froese Tiessen, Jeff Gundy, Ann Hostetler, G. C. Waldrep, Keith Ratzlaff, and many others.

Proposals for scholarly papers, creative writing presentations, and panels are sought for the fourth in a series of conferences on Mennonite writing in the U.S. and Canada. Building on that tradition and the burgeoning of both creative work by and about Mennonites and critical studies of that literature, the conference will both celebrate and examine this rapidly developing literature.

Papers should be suitable for a 15-20 minute reading; panel proposals should group 3-4 individual presentations suitable for a 75-minute session. We encourage proposals (250-300 words) on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to: innovative approaches to individual authors and texts; comparative and cross-border studies; theorizing the categories "ethnic" and "literature"; ethnic literature beyond identity politics; the intersection of Mennonite literature and the recent "theological turn" in high theory; literary work as theological endeavor; considerations of older Mennonite literature, including Martyr's Mirror; considerations of genre Amish and Mennonite fiction; interdisciplinary and cultural studies approaches; considerations of Mennonite writing in conversation with other ethnic literatures; interrogations of national and religious identities as they pertain to North American Mennonite literature; considerations of non-fiction and life writing. Creative proposals should be accompanied by a brief writing sample (3-4 poems or one story/essay) and a selective list of publications. Electronic submissions preferred. Send proposals by **February 1, 2006** to Jeff Gundy gundyj@bluffton.edu

Co-sponsors: Bluffton University and Conrad Grebel University College, with generous support from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and the Marpeck Fund. Conference web page: <http://www.bluffton.edu/eng/conference/>

Religion and Popular Culture

2006 Southwest/Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Associations will meet in Albuquerque, NM, February 8-11, 2006. Deadline for proposals: **November 15, 2005**. The full call for papers is at: <http://www.h-net.org/~swpca/>

The Southwest/Texas branch of the PCA/ACA announces a call for papers on popular culture and religion to be presented at its annual meeting in Albuquerque. Papers should be approximately 20-25 minutes long. Proposals should be no longer than 300 words. Days and times of sessions to be determined.

Panels will be formed according to the themes of the papers presented. This would be a great time to talk about popular religion and the war, especially if we could hear from a variety of perspectives. It would also be a good place to start a discussion on pop culture, religion, and theory. Other than that, anything goes. Proposals are invited from a broad range of perspectives. Yoga, quilting, football, hot rods, hip hop, consumerism, militarism, Christianity - all forms of religion are open for discussion. Papers on religion in the Southwest would be particularly appreciated. You might also note the joint session that is being held with the Sci-fi/fantasy group. Papers are welcome from graduate students as well as established scholars. We are aiming for variety and cross-disciplinary dialogue rather than narrowly focused discussions. Please send a brief abstract with short bio to: wesley.bergen@wichita.edu; or Wes Bergen; Dept. of Religion; Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0076.

Call for Proposals

2006 Biennial Meetings of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network

and the Anabaptist Sociology and Anthropology Association (ASAA) to be held June 8 - 10, 2006 at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, under the auspices of the Institute of Mennonite Studies (IMS)

IMS Conference Theme:

“Holding Fast to the Confession of Our Hope: The *Confession of Faith* Ten Years Later”

(Proposals on other topics also accepted; see below.)

The Institute of Mennonite Studies invites proposals for sessions, workshops, individual paper presentations, etc., on the history, reception, and uses of the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. In conjunction with their conference, IMS has generously agreed to host joint meetings of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network and the Anabaptist Sociology and Anthropology Association. Both of these organizations urge their members to submit proposals on the main theme, but also invite proposals on other themes of interest to members. We expect to have both A-MSN and ASAA sessions on topics other than the main theme.

Thematic Proposals:

It is clear from the introduction to the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* that the authors intended the document to guide the faith and practice of existing Mennonite congregations, and also put forth the claims of the gospel in a serious and compelling manner for those who are searching for faith. The articles of faith were to be an encouragement to “hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for the One who has promised is faithful.”

It has now been a decade since the confession was accepted at Wichita, Kansas, and this anniversary provides a good opportunity to reflect on the impact and use of the confession in both Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. The purpose of this study conference is to describe and assess how the confession fits into the rich confessional history of the church, and how it has functioned in our lives and thoughts these ten years. The intent is that the conference address the various biblical, theological, ethical, historical and practical issues surrounding its creation and its use. The goal is to initiate and encourage wide-ranging discussion, encompassing church and mission as well as academic circles.

Proposals are desired from a wide variety of perspectives, including biblical studies, theology, history, social sciences, the arts, mission/outreach, congregational life and leadership, counseling/therapy, or cultural criticism. (This list is suggestive, not exclusive.) Proposals for sessions or presentations departing from the “traditional” model (reading an academic paper) are welcome.

Both the A-MSN and the ASAA strongly encourage their members to contribute proposals on the IMS conference theme. However, the event is also defined as a general meeting of the two organizations, and proposals are welcome for program content on other topics that would be of interest. The historical roots of the A-MSN are primarily in the biblical and theological disciplines, but they have grown to embrace the humanities and other academic disciplines. The ASAA includes both anthropologists and sociologists, as well as interested individuals from other social sciences and from non-academic settings. Both organizations are committed to encouraging interdisciplinary conversation and inquiry, as well as cultivating collaborative understanding between academic and ecclesial circles. We first met together in 2003 for the conference “Ritual in Anabaptist Communities” at Hillsdale College.

Instructions for All Proposals:

Proposals for individual presentations should be one or two pages in length; proposals for sessions with multiple participants may be proportionally longer. If a proposal involves multiple authors and/or participants, it should clearly designate one specific contact person.

Proposals may be designated as either thematic or non-thematic, but this is not required. The planners reserve the right to review any proposal for inclusion anywhere on the program. IMS, A-MSN and ASAA jointly request right of first refusal for publication of any material presented at the conference.

Contacts for proposals will be notified of decisions regarding their participation by early February of 2006, and will be asked to make a solid commitment to participating in the conference by early March.

Deadline for submissions: **November 15, 2005**

All submissions should be sent to: bngingerich@amb.s.edu

Conference Webpage: www.hillsdale.edu/AcadAssoc/Soc/asaa/Confession/