

ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE SCHOLARS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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Mennonite Scholars in Non-academic Careers

By Ryan S. Schellenberg, editor

As part of the rhythm that has characterized my life for a number of years now, I re-entered my studies this fall after a few months of completely non-academic work. Like many other Canadian students, I have repeatedly spent the summers between academic years planting trees. Reforestation is big business in northern B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, and each year the need for labourers arises at the end of the spring semester. My bones and joints are getting a little too old for the job by now, and I think this past summer will prove to have been my last. But I learned to deeply appreciate the rhythmic transition between the labour of the mind and the labour of the body, between the library and the Canadian wilderness.

This issue of the A-MSN newsletter explores the relationship between scholarship and other forms of employment and vocation. The perspectives of scholars who are not—or not only—employed within the academy help us reflect on questions of scholarly identity and the interaction between scholarship and what I am often tempted to call “the real world.”

Three scholars with very different non- or para-academic careers provide three very different approaches to the issue. Tim Geddert (p. 2), professor of New Testament at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, has embraced a rhythm similar to my own: he paints houses during the summer. The proverbial ivory tower is nowhere to be found in Geddert’s earthy and candid reflections. Geddert trains pastors and church-leaders, and his commitment to engaging the world in which his students will be ministering is evident.

Carol Penner (p. 4) is pastor of The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ontario; she also holds a Ph.D. in theology. There is a tension running throughout Penner’s reflections: “My theological training,” says Penner, “is part of who I am”; but as a pastor, that theological training can be both an asset and a liability. For those who

have firsthand experience of the ambivalence toward theological education that characterizes some congregations, this tension will no doubt be familiar.

Cheryl Leis (p. 5) received a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto’s Centre for the Study of Religion, and currently works as an Ethics Advisor for The Boeing Company. She discusses the disconnect between the study of ethics in the academy and ethical decision making in the corporate world. Leis is convinced that dialogue enriches both parties. She describes her own role as that of a translator, utilizing the insights of the academy but making them intelligible and practicable in the corporate world.

This is my first newsletter as coordinator and newsletter editor for the Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network. For many of you, this is also the first A-MSN newsletter you have received that was not edited by Jeremy Bergen. The Network was founded in 1998; Bergen has served as coordinator and editor since 1999. I am sure you share my appreciation for his commitment to the growth and development of A-MSN as a vehicle for nurturing connections among Mennonite scholars.

As I take on this new role, I anticipate connecting with many of you in a variety of ways. Your feedback and suggestions are always welcome.

Finally, I should say a brief word about myself. I am a doctoral student at the Toronto School of Theology pursuing a degree in New Testament and a member of the Hepburn (Saskatchewan) Mennonite Brethren Church. I’ve had the privilege of being taught by a number of you in the past—at Bethany College, Canadian Mennonite University, and MB Biblical Seminary.

Faculty openings, calls for papers, and conference announcements are posted as soon as we receive them at www.AnabaptistScholars.net.

The “Teacher-Painter”

By Tim Geddert

I begin with my “Rolf Kuhlen Story.” (Rolf, if you should ever read this . . . I did like you, in spite of it all!) I met Rolf Kuhlen in the ministerial association meetings in Ft. McMurray, Alberta. I was planting a church. He was founder and president of the “Ft. McMurray – Edmonton Bible College (non-residential).” That’s what his letterhead claimed. It was also non-accredited and had no students. But his letterhead was impressive. I think he also planted a church, but his long-suffering wife was the only one who ever attended. Oh yes, he also paid for cable TV television time so he could teach: “All four biblical languages,” he used to say, “Hebrew, Greek, Latin and German.”

Somehow Rolf Kuhlen persuaded one of the oil sands workers to study Koine Greek. He had convinced him that he would be a cut above all the rest if he not only knew how to service 150 ton dump-trucks, but also how to read biblical Greek. Rolf’s Bible College had its first student!

Rolf learned at the ministerial association meetings that I painted houses, so he asked me if I could do anything with the peeling paint on the deck outside his mobile home. And so it happened that I was on my knees in *very* grubby clothes, squinting through the dust and debris as I removed old paint from deteriorating lumber . . . and Rolf Kuhlen was tutoring his one student in the fine points of aorist verb forms. I listened in and agreed that Rolf did indeed know enough Greek to be teaching an aspiring “super-educated-oil-sands-worker.”

And then Rolf Kuhlen made his crucial mistake. He was about to help his student with an aorist stem, when he stopped himself and said, “I bet Tim knows what that verb form is!” I don’t know whether he expected me to know or not, but when I promptly supplied the information, you could hear a pin drop! And I could read the expression on the crest-fallen face of Rolf’s student. “If the grubby painter on the deck can read Greek, what am I doing, busting my arteries (I’m not sure which word he used here), trying to master this impossible language?” Rolf Kuhlen had lost his first student! By the way, I tell this story to all my first year Greek students, just in case any of them think that learning Greek is all about prestige and glory, rather than service and ministry. But back to my real topic.

Why do I paint houses? I’ve been asked that frequently. Occasionally when it is 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40 C) here in Fresno, I ask myself the same question, as I try to avoid burning my hands climbing my extension ladder or when I blink away sweat and debris from my clouded contact lenses. Yet I do paint houses every summer—usually exterior trim, occasionally whole houses, inside and/or

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outside. Why do I do it? The more I think about it, the more reasons I discover!

It started with painting fences for a colleague of my father. I think we had no choice about doing it, though I do remember getting paid about 30 cents an hour. When I graduated from fences to houses, it was just a summer job, just what a teenager needed to buy expensive stereo equipment! But I stayed with it. I financed three years of Bible School, three of University education, and two years of Seminary painting houses in various communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Those were boom years (and I was an efficient worker), so I could work 12 weeks and pay for another year's education.

But I kept painting when I quit studying. For the five years I was planting and helping lead a new church, my painting played many roles: It helped subsidize the small church's budget; it helped me combat the ever-looming danger of a "clergy – laity" distinction; it brought me in contact with neighbors and strangers, giving me opportunities to learn the culture in which our church plant aimed to be a witness, helping me discern the questions and the challenges faced by those who would hear my sermons, even affording me lots of time and space to think and plan my sermons. Each summer during those five years I went off salary and painted full-time. Summers were particularly good opportunities for others in the church (many of them teachers) to test their ministry skills and grow into significant co-leaders.

When I've lived abroad (Scotland for 3 years, Germany for 5) my painting was mostly reduced to painting for family, close friends, and *always* the church buildings in which we worshipped. But I was not a painting contractor. After all, I had never "studied" painting and therefore did not qualify to be a painter by the more rigid standards of European bureaucracy.

But I've never quit painting. Over the past 21 years as a seminary professor, I've occasionally answered astonished questions about why a Ph.D. was needed so I could paint their fascia boards. I've usually laughed and said: "My education doesn't make me a better painter, but my painting makes me a better professor." Fascinating conversations have followed that.

My advertising flyers present me as the "Teacher-Painter" who teaches full-time, but uses spare summer hours to share his skills with those whose house could use a new paint job. Virtually every customer for whom I've painted has asked, "So where do you teach?" And when I say Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, the second question is inevitable: "What is a Mennonite?" (Or, occasionally: "What is a seminary?") Many of us know the doors that questions like that can open—and sometimes close. In any case, I am quite sure I am better at painting than at accurately defining "Mennonite."

I was once asked to share in a seminary chapel the reasons I paint. I must have prepared that talk going up and down ladders, because I find no trace of it in my computer. But I do remember some of the things I shared. In addition to things mentioned above, I highlighted:

To keep our bank accounts out of the red! We've chosen a lifestyle that is rich in relationships but not in finances. Putting six children through their childhood (including sports, music lessons, international travel and lots of other time and money consuming activities) pretty much requires a stay-at-home parent (or rather a "wish-she-could-sometimes-stay-at-home-instead-of-ferrying-children-to-and-from-school-and-events" parent). That in turn requires a "sideline job" for the parent whose skills can bring in significant income. My wife's skills as translator, tutor, special education expert, etc. may serve more people in more significant ways than my painting, but our bank account needs my skills to stay out of the red.

To pay our second mortgage! This of course relates directly to the first point. We took a second mortgage to pay for our solar energy system, and, when the bank approved us for more than we expected, to have a swimming pool built. The solar energy will eventually pay for itself . . . the swimming pool will not, except in family fun and frequent parties. Care to join us? I'll try to get most of the paint off my hands before we start a game of Marco Polo!

To make "charitable donations"! The tax laws (and my theology of giving) being what they are, it is to everyone's advantage if I paint seminary classrooms and halls rather than write a check towards the budget. It also helps students call me "Tim" rather than "Dr. Geddert" if they occasionally catch me scraping my knuckles running a wire brush over peeling stucco, and not always lifting my nose out of a boring monograph. Painting the church buildings where I've been a member has also been a fun way to make donations. Once it even afforded me a platform to try to explain what "really matters." My home church wanted to give me lots of public recognition after I volunteered to repaint the sanctuary—after virtually ignoring the numerous times I had preached, led worship, etc. I used the occasion to communicate, in not very subtle ways, that the Master Painter had a master plan to repaint the entire church (not just its building).

To get me away from books and computers! Not only my students need to see me as a well-rounded person. I need that as well. Some people focus on recreation. I do some of those as well, but painting is my best "Ausgleich"—that which brings balance into my life.

To get me in contact with non-seminary people! I can serve seminary students without leaving the campus. But I cannot prepare them to serve their neighbors and parish

ioners without ever meeting such people and finding out what questions they are asking, or not asking.

To get me back into good physical condition! Because I don't follow a regular exercise regime, my summers give me the perfect opportunity to shed about 15 pounds and get me back in physical shape, so I can do other things I love—mountain climbing, for example. (By the way, I don't decrease my weight by *another* 15 pounds each summer. I just shed the ones I regain every winter!)

To follow the model of many others! "Tent-making ministry" has a long and venerable history! As the one whose example bequeathed us the label once wrote: "What your hands find to do, do with all your might!" My hands find fading and peeling boards, and those who watch me work would assure you I take Paul's advice

seriously. By the time classes start each Fall, I have the muscles and scars to prove it. And we should not forget that an even more famous carpenter turned preacher left us a model that included more than sermons. He touched lepers, blessed children, washed feet. When I paint houses I feel like I am in touch with this side of Jesus.

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From the Academy to the Congregation

By Carol Penner

When I pursued my doctoral studies in theology, I wasn't planning to be a minister. If I had known my eventual career path earlier on, no doubt I would have taken a Master of Divinity somewhere, instead of pursuing an M.A. in systematic theology at St. Michael's College in Toronto, and I would have forgone the long doctoral studies excursion! However, teaching was my goal at the time, and in fact I really enjoyed the sessional teaching that I did at various universities for many years.

Eventually I moved into other types of employment. I did some freelance writing of educational resources for different churches. With some additional clinical pastoral education, I worked as a chaplain in various hospital settings, and from there I became a pastor. I served as an interim minister in an urban outreach church, and am currently serving in a small rural Mennonite congregation. The question I want to muse on here, is how my doctoral studies have influenced my post-teaching career.

My academic background was very helpful in writing educational resources. Undoubtedly having a Ph.D. behind my name helped me get the assignments. Writing a curriculum for the person in the pew was quite different than writing for a professor. For one thing, I was getting paid to write instead of simply getting marked (a novel and pleasant sensation!). The theological training I had gave me insight into the topics, as well as an ability to organize my thoughts and communicate them clearly.

As a chaplain, I found my doctoral studies were an asset in two ways. First, I had done my academic work primarily in a Catholic college. I had studied Catholic theology and wrestled with it from my own Mennonite per-

spective. I had gone to mass regularly at the college and found it meaningful. I had Catholic friends, including some in religious orders, who had expanded my horizons about the landscape of religious devotion. So when I became a chaplain in a Catholic hospital, there was no religious culture shock, but a slipping into familiar patterns of faith. Second, as a chaplain I was continually faced with the problem of human suffering. I was given the opportunity to walk with people through very difficult circumstances, and encouraged them as they tried to find God in their story. I think my theological training gave me the latitude I needed to navigate the very different streams of religious meaning that I encountered.

Eventually I moved into congregational ministry. The first congregation to which I was called had no adult education programs, and in fact there was a very low literacy rate in the congregation. Teaching was not really a part of that pastoral experience! However in that setting I was faced with a number of ethical challenges and delicate pastoral decisions, and I do believe that my background in systematic theology helped me to intellectually untangle very knotty situations.

I also want to mention that my academic background was probably more of a liability than an asset in getting that job. People were wary of an "academic" being parachuted into a pastoral role, particularly for a congregation whose educational level was very low. After I had been ministering there for six months I overheard someone talking about me to someone else: "We were really worried she would talk over us, but we can understand everything she says." I had not been concerned about being able to make myself understood, but obviously others had been worried about just that.

In my current pastoral situation, with the exception of Sunday school, there is almost no tradition of adult education. I spent three years trying to change that before I realized that the demographics of the church, and its geographical spread, meant that people simply are not prepared to participate in programs outside of Sunday morning. That was disappointing, because I love to teach and would have liked to engage people in discussions about the bible and theology and church history. So now I occasionally lead Sunday school, and that is the extent of my teaching. I sometimes marvel at the luxury of regular weekly three hour classes with a constant group of people, compared to 45 minutes of sporadically attended and frequently interrupted study, as people come late or leave early to Sunday school.

I do feel that my doctoral studies are helpful in the area of sermon preparation. I love to study, and having done it for so many years, I can do that pretty efficiently. I am fortunate to be serving in a small church where the administrative load is minimal, so I can study each week. I contrast this to the work I did as a chaplain, where study time was something I was not paid to do, but could pursue in my free time.

Preaching is not teaching, but it is communication about understanding faith. As I read the various commentaries for my sermon preparation, my academic history continues to provide a framework that helps me to sort

and sift perspectives. I have people attending my congregation from a variety of denominational backgrounds, and I have a sense of where those religious traditions originated and why the language people use to express their faith varies so dramatically. I studied theology from Latin America and Africa and Asia in my program, and that has helped me to understand some of the dynamics of the larger Mennonite World Conference.

In the area of worship, the way I structure and lead the congregation is, I think, nuanced by my theological training. Studying at Toronto School of Theology, I took courses with Anglicans, Presbyterians, and United Church people, and became comfortable with their expressions of faith. This has resulted in my comfort in drawing from a wide variety of worship resources from different denominations, and having more of a critical eye toward what is helpful or not helpful even in Mennonite resources.

My theological training is a part of who I am. It shaped my character and the way I understand the world. I enjoyed my years as a theology student. Right now, the text I am reading is my congregation, and it continually surprises and challenges me every week.

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Critical Theory in the Corporate World: An Interview with Cheryl Leis

Cheryl Leis received a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto's Centre for the Study of Religion, where she did her dissertation work in the philosophy of religion, focusing on Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics. She is also a graduate of Goshen College, where she studied theatre and languages. Cheryl is applying her Ph.D. in a setting where she had never planned to end up. She is working as an Ethics Advisor for The Boeing Company, at the Boeing Canada office in Winnipeg, MB. She describes herself as a translator, utilizing the insights of the academy but making them intelligible and practicable in the corporate world. I spoke with Cheryl recently about her experience of working as an academic outside the academy. This is an abridged version of our very interesting conversation:

RS: What were your career goals when you began your doctoral studies?

CL: Like most people doing graduate work in the humanities, I suppose, I assumed I would teach. I didn't think beyond that at all. Since my professors didn't think

beyond the academic world, no other possibilities were presented to me.

RS: How did your transition into the corporate world come about?

CL: After defending my dissertation in December 1996, I did some sessional teaching at Wilfred Laurier University. There were few faculty positions open at the time, and almost nothing within commuting distance of my home in Waterloo Region. I was getting increasingly frustrated with sessional work, and spoke with some of my mentors about my frustration. One of them had a colleague who was involved in organizational consulting. I contacted him, and quickly landed a six-week teaching contract—earning more in six weeks than I could make in a year's worth of sessional teaching. I thoroughly enjoyed the work, and was even able to incorporate aspects of my theatre background into my teaching in order to engage the students.

In July 1997, I attended a conference of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association in New York

City that I had heard about from a colleague at Wilfred Laurier. Suddenly I was exposed to all these opportunities to apply philosophical studies to the world outside the academy. I began to do more organizational consulting, coaching of leaders, and strategic planning.

After moving to Winnipeg, I saw the advertisement for the job of Ethics Advisor at The Boeing Company. My first response was: "Why is Boeing in Winnipeg?" And right after that I remember turning to my husband and saying: "Do you really think they'd pay somebody to do that?" I've been working for Boeing since June 2005.

RS: Tell me about your dissertation project at the University of Toronto.

CL: I focused on the Frankfurt School of critical theory—I worked with Marsha Hewitt, who evoked my interest in the Frankfurt School during my M.A. studies—and in particular on Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics. I focused on Adorno's critique of ideological manipulation of a message by institutions. As my background had been in the arts, I used as an example, the Western institutional church's manipulation of art as the message bearer.

RS: So even during your doctorate you were thinking about how institutions function. Have you been able to draw on that research in your current institutional setting?

CL: Yes, certainly. I was thinking quite a bit about power and authority. Right after defending the dissertation I organized 2 conferences, one year apart, on the theme of Power and Authority in the Mennonite Church. We had participants from across North America at both. Then during my work in organizational consulting, it gave me a perspective other than what most OD (Organizational Development) folks will bring to the table. It was especially useful when I was hired by the Bishop of the Anglican diocese of Rupert's Land to work with him and a team on their visioning and strategic planning process. I just asked different questions than one normally asks during such processes. Here at Boeing, I see how words are used and, again, ask questions that often get at assumptions no one else thinks are issues until the question is asked.

RS: Do you continue to view yourself as a scholar?

CL: That's a timely question. Just last week I presented a paper at the European Business Ethics Network at Leuven University in Belgium. My co-presenter, (a Belgian now based in Asia) and I both have PhDs (he did his PhD in Philosophy at Leuven) and both work in the corporate world (he's not at Boeing, however.) But 90% of our audience was academics. My reaction to the experience was disbelief with how people within the academy spoke conceptually about business ethics as a *practice* yet made statements that *in practice* were absolutely irrelevant.

The image I have is of an armchair football player, telling players to catch the ball from in front of the television. The reality on the ground is a whole lot different.

But at work in the business world, I'm the one who is looked at askance: "Why would you ask that question?" Or managers say to me: "This issue has nothing to do with ethics!" Sometimes it seems like they don't recognize an ethical dilemma even when it hits them square in the face! So I find myself straddling both worlds. I try to bring the philosophical inquiry that's missing from our day-to-day conversation at Boeing. I function in many ways like a translator between the two worlds.

So, am I a scholar? I continue to read and research and draft white papers for internal use at Boeing. My one complaint is that I'm so busy with daily tasks that I don't have time to do as much reading or writing as I would like. I'm convinced we need more writing from *within* the business community. We need a response to academic writing that engages it at the same level.

I'm not negative about the contribution of the academy. Academics have time to do thorough research and careful writing, which is very important. I don't have that luxury. I'm always responding to some emergency. I have to do my philosophical discerning on the fly. The story I use to explain it is about a heart surgeon who brings his Harley Davidson to a mechanic. The mechanic checks it out, notices the spark plugs need replacing, and gets it running again. He says to the doctor, "We do the same kind of work, don't we? We both figure out what is not working and put it right again." The heart surgeon replies, "Interesting analogy. A big difference, though, is that I have to do it while the motor's running."

RS: Looking back from your current vantage point, what aspects of your studies were most relevant to work in the business world? Or most irrelevant?

CL: I'd have to say Adorno's dialectics were most relevant. Adorno pushed me not to accept things at face value. He talks about tearing away the veil of "reality" and getting underneath the rhetoric. The truth will come through in glimpses through the cracks of what we have come to accept as reality., and it's important to recognize those moments. Those lessons have served me well. But Adorno was also the most irrelevant. He was very elitist, and wrote in such a way that ensured that no one but academics would ever read him.

RS: Describe how you see the relationship between the work of ethicists in the academy and ethical decision making by corporations like Boeing?

CL: There simply isn't enough interaction between the two worlds. We really need more dialogue. I was at two conferences recently, the one in Leuven, which was 90% academics, and one 6 months earlier in Brussels that was

90% business people. That's indicative of what the situation is like.

I wish more academics had a chance to see what my work is like, just to get a sense of reality on the ground. Another way to ground academic work in reality is to encourage students of philosophy, religion, or theology to consider research outside the academy—research that isn't simply text based. And of course universities should encourage graduates to think about non-traditional careers. In order for that to happen professors must be familiar with opportunities outside the academy.

RS: In your last email to me, you said: "I have found it incredibly enriching to see how an unarticulated application of philosophical principles have such an amazing impact in bringing about change. The power of words is real in the world in which I spend my everyday." Can you elaborate on that?

CL: I'll refer to an example from my work prior to coming to Boeing, I was doing some consulting with an organization that was in the midst of a process of significant change. At one point in the discussion, I drew a diagram of Hegel's phenomenology—thesis, antithesis, synthesis and how Spirit takes on the most appropriate form for each moment in history. It helped unveil the situation the organization was facing. I didn't explain that it was Hegel; that would have been irrelevant. And they responded by saying: "Oh yeah, that makes so much sense!" I don't say when I'm quoting philosophers or theologians for that matter; I borrow shamelessly and I translate.

RS: Does your Anabaptist-Mennonite identity have any influence on your work at Boeing?

CL: When I think about that Anabaptist heritage and an understanding of its roots, I often think of the skepticism of authority involved in breaking away from the state church. In some ways I'm not an ideal employee for a hierarchy. I understand that there is a hierarchy here, but I suppose that a sense of leveling is a significant thing I bring with me. What I'm learning to do is to walk the fault line of a tempered radical – and here I'm quoting Debra Meyerson from Harvard, who wrote a great book recently called Tempered Radicals about those who are able to maintain their integrity while remaining inside an organization in order to be able to bring about change.

I also keep coming back to questions of justice and fairness. Sometimes there is resistance to that in a corporate setting. Not long ago one of my bosses told me that just isn't how things work and he also keeps reminding me that I can't bring justice to all, all by myself.

It really comes down to treating all people with dignity. If someone comes into my office, I treat them the same whether they're wearing overalls or a suit. It's about having love for all people.

And for many people who come into my office, I am the only priestly person in their life. I'm in a neutral position here, since I don't report to anyone in this building. They can come to me in confidence. So I really do see this as ministry. In addition to helping them clarify their thinking, I also have an opportunity to be a minister for people.

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Book Notes

Arthur Paul Boers, Barbara Nelson Gingrich, Eleanor Kreider, **John D. Rempel**, and **Mary H. Schertz**, eds. *Take Our Moments and Our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book, Ordinary Time*. IMS/Herald, 2007.

Jeremy M. Bergen, **Paul G. Doersken**, and **Karl Koop**, eds. *Creed and Conscience: Essays in Honour of A. James Reimer*. Pandora, 2007.

Reta Halteman Finger. *Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts*. Eerdmans, 2007.

———. *Roman House Churches for Today*. 2nd. ed. Eerdmans, 2007.

Timothy J. Geddert. *Double Take: New Meanings from Old Stories*. Kindred, 2007.

Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and **David L. Weaver-Zercher**. *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*. Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Willard M. Swartley. *Send Forth Your Light: A Vision for Peace, Mission, and Worship*. Herald, 2007.

Donald E. Miller, **Scott Holland**, Lon Fendall, and Dean Johnson. *Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers*. Cascadia/Herald/Oikumen, 2007.

Daniel S. Schapani, ed. *Mennonite Perspectives on Pastoral Counseling*. IMS/Herald, 2007.

Tripp York. *The Purple Crown: The Politics of Martyrdom*. Herald, 2007.

Earl Zimmerman. *Practicing the Politics of Jesus: The Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics*. C. Henry Smith Series 8. Cascadia/Herald, 2007.

Journal

Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology

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Research Notes

“From Satire to Social Reform -- Johann Daniel Falk in Classical Weimar, 1749 -1826.”

This is the working title of a biography of Johann Daniel Falk, who began his life in a poor, Danzig family. Thinking to make a career as a writer of satire in the literary capital, Weimar, he soon was appalled at the gaping social disparities in that "classical" world of Goethe and Schiller, and, with little support from either the cultural or government authorities established a truly faith-based and at the same time forward-looking establishment, later called the Falk Institute, which housed but also schooled and trained the street children and youth, preparing them both mentally and spiritually for a sustainable living. His progressive ideas soon were copied in other European cities.

There is an excellent book on Falk in German, by Johannes Demandt, *Johannes Daniel Falk: Sein Weg von Danzig ueber Halle nach Weimar (1768-1799)*. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999.

An English language book could look as follows:
Chapter 1: Johannes from the Baltic Sea; 2: Theology or Literature? Halle University; 3: "The Devil Writes a Letter" - Early Satires; 4: Falk in Weimar: Wieland, Schiller, Herder, Goethe; 5: Napoleon in Weimar! The Social Consequences of War; 6: "But it is possible that satire may not do much good" - Falk's Transformation; 7: The Society for Friends in Need. Beginnings of the Lutherhof; 8. Falk's Personal Journey: the Secret Diary; 9. God and the World. Conversations in Goethe's Garden.

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“The Church as an Alternative Society in a Globalization Context: An Ecclesiological Contribution to Political Theology”

Using the counter-cultural approach in contextual theology (see Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*), I want to critically analyze a contemporary neo-Anabaptist ecclesiology—the “Church-as-polis” model of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas—in light of the challenges of “neoliberal” globalization—the increasing gap between poor and rich, radical individualism, agonistic ontology, culture of greed, etc. My goal is to propose a model of political ecclesiology for Quebec society that is catholic, (neo-)Anabaptist, and liberationist.

Steve Robitaille
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Currently I am working on an essay entitled, “ ‘O Land, Land, Land’: Reading the Earth Story in Both Testaments.” I am looking at metaphor as a way of moving toward a biblical theology on a subject so heavily treated in the OT and so minimally mentioned in the NT.

Elmer Martens
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I am currently working on an annotated English translation of Melchior Hoffman's commentary on the book of Revelation published in Strasbourg in 1530. It has the distinction of being the only complete commentary on this biblical book in the early German reformation. Another in Latin appeared in 1563. Hoffman's commentary was written primarily for the spiritual edification of Anabaptists and is much less concerned with predicting end-time events than one would expect.

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Mennonite Scholars and Friends AAR/SBL

Reception

Friday, November 16, 2007, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego
Room: Ford AB
Hosted by Eastern Mennonite University

Forum

Saturday, November 17, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
San Diego Convention Center, Room 26A
Hosted by Eastern Mennonite University

Reflections on J. Denny Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement*

Presiding:
Ted Grimsrud, EMU

Panelists:
Sharon Baker, Messiah College
Mark Thiessen Nation, EMU
Tom Yoder Neufeld,
Conrad Grebel University College

Respondent:
J. Denny Weaver, Bluffton University

Faculty Positions

The **Department of Biology at Bethel College** (North Newton, Kansas), invites applications for a tenure-track faculty position to begin fall 2008. Candidates should demonstrate potential for excellence in undergraduate teaching and in the development of a research program involving students. We seek an individual with particular expertise in the areas of molecular biology, genetics, neurobiology, and/or developmental biology. Ph.D. required. Teaching responsibilities include courses at both the beginning and upper levels, including general education. Preference will be given to applicants with strong academic credentials and who are eager to participate actively within a diverse community of scholars. Applicants should be in sympathy with an academic community that values personal faith development, peace-making, social justice, cross-cultural learning, and service; Bethel College is affiliated with Mennonite Church USA. Please include a cover letter that includes a list of relevant coursework and research experience, curriculum vitae, statement of teaching philosophy, and a description of research interests that can involve student collaborators. In addition, three letters of reference should be sent to: Dr. Brad Born, Academic Dean, Bethel College, 300 E. 27th Street, N. Newton, KS 67117 or to bborn@bethelks.edu. Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer. Review of applications will begin **November 1** and continue until the position is filled.

Conrad Grebel University College invites applications for a full-time regular faculty position in **undergraduate Religious Studies and graduate Theological Studies** at the University of Waterloo, with a **teaching and research specialty in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology**. The appointment will begin July 1, 2008 at either Assistant or Associate Professor level. Applications will be accepted until **November 9, 2007**, or until the position is filled. The College is committed to employment equity. Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. For further information about the position, qualifications and application procedures, see: www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/positions.

Transitions

Bruce Hiebert will defend his Ph.D. dissertation, "A Crisis of Masculinity: North American Mennonites and World War I," November 9, 2007 at Simon Fraser University.

Gerald W. Schlabach, associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, has been named director of the Justice and Peace Studies Program at the university.

Bluffton University invites applications for a full time, tenure-track faculty position in **early modern and modern European history** to begin fall 2008. Ph.D. preferred; ABD considered. The successful candidate must have the ability to teach Humanities survey courses and upper-level, more specialized topics. Candidates with a specialization in the history of European Anabaptism and/or Mennonitism (broadly considered) will be strongly preferred. An ability to teach the Western political tradition is desirable, as would be a capacity to teach a course in a non-Western subfield. Review of applications begins **November 1** and will continue until an appointment is made. Compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Send letter of interest, curriculum vita or resume, 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.

Canadian Mennonite University invites applications or nominations for the following tenure-track positions, commencing as early as August 1, 2008:

Business and Organizational Administration -

Processing of candidates will begin on **Nov 1, 2007**

Biology -

Processing of candidates will begin on **Nov 30, 2007**

Psychology -

Processing of candidates will begin on **Nov 30, 2007**

For more information, visit <http://www.cmu.ca/employment.html>, or contact the Academic Dean, Dr. Gordon Zerbe, gzerbe@cmu.ca.

After teaching philosophy at Medicine Hat College for 35 years, **Elmer J. Thiessen** has recently retired and moved to Waterloo, Ontario. He hopes to continue writing and is open to short-term teaching stints overseas. Tentative plans include a return to the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, Belgium in 2008-9. He also wants to begin work on another manuscript dealing with the ethics of evangelism from a Christian theological/philosophical perspective.

Conferences

"Embodying Sexual Wholeness in a Broken World"

January 21–24, 2008, Harrisonburg, VA

The 2008 School for Leadership Training (SLT) at Eastern Mennonite Seminary will address the question of what it means to live fully the life that God is calling us to in a sexual-obsessed, broken world. Plenary speakers are Brenda Martin Hurst, former theology professor at EMU and currently pastor of Frazer (PA) Mennonite Church whose doctoral work focused on Mennonite beliefs about sexuality; Keith Graber Miller, theology professor at Goshen (Ind.) College and Annmarie Early, professor of counseling at EMU. To register online or to learn more, visit the SLT website: www.emu.edu/seminary/slt. The cost for registration is \$120 per person or \$195 per couple by December 1, 2007.

"Paul and Politics"

2008 Janzen Lectureship & Symposium celebrating the work of John E. Toews, **March 27–28, 2008**, at the Fresno Pacific University and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary campuses, Fresno, CA.

The Janzen lectureship in Biblical Studies was created in 2003 to promote careful scholarship in biblical interpretation, as well as the witness of the Christian church. As the 2008 Janzen lecturer, John E. Toews, Ph.D., will present on his most recent scholarship on Paul and politics. These presentations (Thursday evening and Friday morning) will be followed by a symposium Friday afternoon and evening, celebrating Toews' 40 year contribution to the Mennonite Church, Mennonite higher education, and scholarship. Papers will critically engaged Toews' scholarship (issues, themes, approaches, etc.) and will reflect on his contribution to the church or to higher education as teacher or administrator.

16th Believers Church Conference: "Congregationalism, Denominationalism, and the Body of Christ," June 11-14, 2008, sponsored by the Institute of Theology and the Church, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, MB.

Beginning with the biblical image of the church as "the body of Christ," this conference will focus on ecclesiology and understandings of Christian community in the Believers Church tradition. For more information about the conference see http://www.cmu.ca/church-community/02_BelieversChurchConf.html. For specific inquires contact Helmut Harder (hharder@cmu.ca).

"Anabaptist Convictions After Marpeck"

June 26–28, 2009, Bluffton, OH

This interdisciplinary conference, originally scheduled for October 25–27, 2007, has been rescheduled for June 26–28, 2009 at Bluffton University. The A-MSN is a co-sponsor of this conference. Further information is forthcoming.

Calls for Papers

MCC Identity

In 2010 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) will mark 90 years of service in the name of Christ. With this milestone approaching, MCC seeks to gather a wide variety of academics and others to reflect on different dimensions of the questions: "What is MCC? What has MCC been? What is MCC becoming?" MCC therefore invites persons from a wide variety of disciplines—including but not limited to historians, theologians, economists, anthropologists, conflict transformation theorists and practitioners, sociologists, communications studies scholars, cultural theorists, development studies scholars and practitioners, and missiologists—to submit one-to-two page proposals for papers addressing these broad questions for possible inclusion in a book of essays to commemorate this landmark. Limited funds are available to cover select research expenses. The deadline for proposal submissions is February 1, 2008. All proposals will be reviewed by a project coordinating committee. Authors of accepted proposals will commit themselves to completing their essays by February 1, 2009, for inclusion in an edited publication to appear by 2010. MCC is also beginning to plan a consultation at which authors of accepted proposals and others will gather to reflect on MCC's identity from multiple disciplinary perspectives. A longer call for papers listing possible topics to address can be obtained from the project coordinator, Alain Epp Weaver (eppweaver@uchicago.edu).

Proposals should clearly specify the question or questions the author will address; the resources she or he plans to consult and investigate; and the methodological assumptions and approach he or she will bring to the project. Proposals should be no longer than two single-spaced pages in length and should be sent to eppweaver@uchicago.edu by **February 1, 2008**. Limited funds are available to support certain expenses such as travel to relevant archives and photocopying; to apply for these funds, authors should attach a budget detailing anticipated expenses to the proposal.

Calls for Papers

Religion and Popular Culture

2008 Southwest/Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Associations 29th Annual Conference, Albuquerque, NM, **February 13–16, 2008**, Hyatt Regency Albuquerque.

Deadline for proposals: **Nov. 15, 2007**

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. Registration: <http://www.hnet.org/~swpca/Registration/registration.htm>.

Possible topics for this year include: Islam in the media; Harry Potter; The Politics of the Religious Left; The Religious Right and the Iraq War. 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.

Please send a brief abstract with short bio to Wes Bergen, wesley.bergen@wichita.edu; or via mail to Dept. of Religion, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0076. Phone: 316-283-0369 (home).

“Upgraded? The Influence of Technology on Christian Worship”

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, **August 7–9, 2008**.

AMBS extends an invitation for proposals for presentations to be submitted by **January 15, 2008**. This invitation is for all who are interested in thinking constructively and critically about how technology is shaping congregational worship—pastors, worship leaders, musicians, sound and video projection technicians, artists. Send proposals to Rebecca Slough, academic dean and associate professor of worship and the arts, rslough@ambs.edu; or Craig Neufeld, senior Master of Divinity student at AMBS, cbneufeld@student.ambs.edu. Or proposals may be sent by mail to either contact person at 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Breaking out of Subjectivity: Contemporary Challenges in the Study of Religion

McGill-CREOR Graduate Students' Conference, **March 7, 2008**, Montreal, Quebec.

The aim of the conference is a) to give graduate students an opportunity to present research papers in front of a sympathetic audience, b) to share and refine our research with the larger graduate student community, and c) to become better acquainted with our current and future colleagues. We also hope to foster graduate student membership in the new and exciting multidisciplinary organization, CREOR. We are interested in contributions from all disciplines, including philosophy, political science, law, religious studies, sociology, etc.

Today, the idea of a fully objective truth or reality is perceived to be a naïve and artificial construction. How then can we as students of religious studies successfully negotiate the poles of subjectivity and objectivity? How do the religious traditions themselves negotiate between subjectivity and objectivity, or between the self and the other? We welcome all papers variously engaging such questions relative to the study of religion.

We warmly invite your proposals for short paper presentations (20 minutes).

Proposals should include the following in either MS Word or PDF format:

- An abstract of no more than 500 words
- A brief biography or CV, including your institutional affiliation and contact information
- Any technical requests, such as audio/visual equipment

These proposals as well as any questions or requests for further information should be sent to the following address: gradconference.relgstud@mail.mcgill.ca, by **January 11, 2008**. More information available at: <http://rsgs.mcgill.ca/gradconference>.

Shi'a-Mennonite Dialogue Continues

On May 27-30, seven Mennonite scholars participated in the 3rd Shi'a-Mennonite Dialogue, held at Conrad Grebel University. The seven Shi'a participants came from the Khomeini Institute in Qom, Iran, which has some close relationships to Iran's political leaders. The opening, public session of the Dialogue was disrupted by a Canadian-Iranian group strongly opposed to the present Iranian government. Afterwards, presentations on spirituality from each of the participants were made as planned.

Mennonite participants were Arnold Snyder and A. James Reimer from Conrad Grebel, Irma Fast Dueck and Harry Huebner from Canadian Mennonite University, David Shenk of Eastern Mennonite Missions, John Hoover from the Near East School of Theology (Lebanon), and Tom Finger, independent scholar from the U.S.A. Lydia Harder of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre and Susan Kennel Harrison of the Toronto School of Theology organized and chaired the Dialogues.

On August 25-26 Finger presented a paper at the Third International Conference on Mahdism in Tehran, Iran, and spent an additional week in Iran. In August, 2006, Finger, David Shenk, and Gerald Shenk of Eastern Mennonite University contributed papers to the Second Mahdism Conference in Tehran. Their attendance was instrumental in setting up a meeting, arranged by M.C.C., between Iranian President Ahmadinejad and 40 American religious leaders when Ahmadinejad visited the U.N in September, 2006. Finger and Shenk attended this meeting, which has been followed by a delegation of 13 Americans to Iran in February, 2007, and a second meeting with the Iranian President at the U.N. this September.

Gerald Shenk and Peter Dula of EMU planned a Conference with an Iranian delegation of 15 persons for this September, but U.S. denials of visas to some Iranians caused the meeting to be cancelled.

Report courtesy of Tom Finger.

Mennonite Graduate Student Conference

The fourth Mennonite Graduate Student Conference, sponsored by the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC), will take place in mid-August 2008 at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Watch for conference details and an official call for papers at www.AnabaptistScholars.net.

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 from a wide variety of disciplines is encouraged (e.g. Philosophy, English, Sociology, Psychology, Peace Studies, Religion, Theology, Biblical Studies, Ethics, History, etc.).

If you know of Mennonite graduate students who should be made aware of this conference, please email Allan Rudy-Froese (allanrf@rogers.com).