

ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE SCHOLARS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars *and . . .*

By Jeremy M. Bergen, editor

The themes of most A-MSN newsletters have been of the form “Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars *and . . .*” Scholars *and* publishing, or academic freedom, or the media, or interdisciplinarity, and so on. This way of framing issues begs the question of what “Anabaptist-Mennonite” means, and thus articles in this newsletter are wrestling, at least implicitly, with issues of religious identity as it intersects with some “other” element of life or work. In *A-MSN Newsletter 2/2* (December 1999) and *3/1* (May 2000) [both available online] several authors reflected on the possibly desirable ambiguity of such a designation, which can refer to historical origins, material affirmations of faith, particular research questions, or the commitment to pursue research questions in a some particular way. An ongoing discussion about whether the A-MSN ought to consist of scholars who do work on “Anabaptist-Mennonite themes,” however defined, or whether it ought to consist of “Anabaptist-Mennonite people,” however defined, who do work on a wide range of scholarly topics, reflects further issues of identity.

The theme of the previous and present issue, Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars *and congregations*, raises new questions. Is “Anabaptist-Mennonite” circumscribed by denominational affiliation? Do one’s religious and academic lives constitute separate spheres, or is there an intrinsic connection? Is congregational involvement necessary for an identity as an Anabaptist-Mennonite scholar? If so, which congregations count? And how does the identity of scholar create tensions with the character of congregational life?

The three essayists in this issue address the theme from three distinct perspectives. Peter Jankowski (p. 2) reflects personally as an academic whose various congregational contexts have been occasions for working through the integration of faith and the discipline of psychology. Thomas Lehman (p. 4) examines the emer-

gence of one particular congregation from a number of individuals with some “Anabaptist” identity, many of whom are also scholars. Finally, with a transfer from a Mennonite to a Baptist congregation as his point of departure, Paul Martens (p. 6) raises basic questions about the very idea of denominational identity, with its implications of a core essence. Something has been lost when a way of being faithful, designated “Anabaptist,” is linked with particular denominational affiliation.

As always I invite your response to these essays and to the theme in general—and will pass them on to the next editor.

This is my last newsletter as A-MSN coordinator and editor. You will notice an ad on p. 5 for a new coordinator. I began in this role in 1999, shortly after starting an M.A. degree. As I am now in the dissertation phase of a Ph.D. (in theology), it is time to allow someone else to take this leadership role. It has been a privilege to connect with so many of you individually, and to communicate through this newsletter. I can only hope that the A-MSN has been a vehicle that has helped you to make connections with other scholars. I have personally experienced the richness of such connections.

I want to thank in particular those of you who have responded positively to my invitations to contribute essays for this newsletter. I have been encouraged by your willingness to do so, and by the insightful perspectives offered. Thank you to the steering committee that continues to guide this work. Without delving into the structural details, the A-MSN is a project of the Toronto Mennonite Centre, which is itself a program administered by Conrad Grebel University College on behalf of a wider Mennonite constituency of educational institutions and denominations. This ongoing institutional support is vital to the success of this modest initiative—I am grateful for all these partners.

Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network

47 Queen's Park Crescent East
Toronto, ON M5S 2C3 Canada

t: 416-978-6078

f: 416-978-7821

e: jeremy.bergen@utoronto.ca

w: www.AnabaptistScholars.net

Coordinator and Editor: Jeremy M. Bergen

The Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network is a project of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, Conrad Grebel University College. The Institute of Mennonite Studies is a co-sponsor.

Steering committee

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Jeremy M. Bergen, Toronto Mennonite Theological

Centre, Toronto, ON

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Congregational and Academic Lives

By Peter Jankowski

As I reflected on the relation between my congregational involvement and academic career, I noticed that the framing of the question, at least as I put it, was reflective of the "separate spheres paradigm." The separate spheres paradigm is discussed considerably in the literature on the scholarly integration of faith and psychology, and is related to the larger discussion about the private-public dichotomy that exists in our society. For many persons, much like myself, teaching in the discipline of psychology at a Christian institution, the task of faith-learning integration begins with the recognition that my education at a state university in large part required me to set aside my faith in order to learn the discipline. It was not that religion or spirituality could not be researched or talked about; after all, I was in graduate school during the time when the discipline of marriage and family therapy was opening up spirituality as a topic for empirical study and there was considerable scholarly writing on how to explore spirituality with clients in therapy. And yet, my experience was still one in which I constructed a paradigm in which my personal faith and theology was a separate domain of knowledge from the formal discipline of marriage and family therapy. As such, there was an added bifurcation of the private sphere within the private-public dichotomy, which is ironic given that marriage and family therapy specifically, and psychology in general, is primarily concerned with the private world of persons. So, while the discipline taught me a lot about the need to recognize the influence of and in many ways challenge the effects of the private-public dichotomy, when it came to my faith particularly as expressed within my congregational life, it remained a separate sphere.

My scholarship agenda for the past seven years has been one of trying to bring these two domains together. However, it has not so much been about finding points of divergence and convergence between the separate spheres, but more about deconstructing the separate spheres paradigm with which I had come to view the world and my place in it. I feel as though in many ways I have been successful in deconstructing the separate spheres paradigm, at least in terms of my life as a scholar. I have worked extremely hard at interdisciplinary integration and applied or intra-disciplinary integration (Bouma-Prediger, 1990). I have brought my emerging personal theology and evolving theory of therapy into greater dialogue with each other; and most recently this work has

centered on what can broadly be defined as peace psychology. I can even say that the past seven years has resulted in a time of significant spiritual transformation, or what Bouma-Prediger called experiential integration. I attribute the spiritual transformation in large part to my engagement in the tasks of inter and intra-disciplinary integration. I have also been able to see progress in living out my faith in everyday life, or what Bouma-Prediger termed faith-praxis integration. Although as is evident, there is still a bifurcation of my faith in some ways and so it is this aspect of integration that needs more attention. What is perhaps most interesting however, is that many of these changes have occurred outside of my congregational life, with one notable exception.

Before I delve into that exception, I must admit that for most of my graduate education and for the first four years of the last seven that I have been describing, I have not been a part of a congregation that would be defined as Anabaptist-Mennonite, primarily because there were not any Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations within sixty minutes of where we were living. That being said, I'm not sure how my experience during graduate school or the immediate experience following graduate school would have been different. As for the notable exception, it occurred while I was a part of a group of congregants that would meet weekly for prayer and book discussion. We would alternate between reading chapters from a theology book and a book of the Bible. Probably about two years into this group, while I was beginning my first academic job at a Christian institution, we decided to read *Good News and Good Works* by Ron Sider. The reading of that book had a profound effect on my personal theology, and I found direct application of that theology to my life as a scholar, particularly in the area of teaching for social justice, pursuing social change through the clinical practice of marriage and family therapy, and allowing a social justice ethic to inform my scholarship.

As I think back on this time, I do not think it was solely the book that brought about those changes. The reading of that book in the context of that small group of local church congregants was a culminating point for some changes that had already begun to take place through a variety of other experiences, going back a number of years. While the experience invigorated my life as a Christian scholar, it simultaneously had an unsettling effect on my congregational involvement. In the two years that followed this experience, I found it increasingly more difficult to live out the changes within the local church that were happening in my academic career. For a brief moment my congregational involvement brought the spheres into closer proximity with each other; there was a synergy between what was happening in the one in relation to what was happening in the other. Then

at some point the spheres began to repel each other, and yet, it was not like it had been before. This time it was not that my faith was contained in one sphere and my academic life was in the other, it was that my faith as expressed in academia had become increasingly incompatible with my faith as expressed in the local church. Despite the integration and then the (dis)integration that occurred, one other positive outcome of this three year period was the founding of a not-for-profit, faith-based agency that is now in its 4th year of existence. The agency serves low income students by offering free tutoring, reading programs and mentoring relationships. One of the members of that now disbanded small group is the executive director of the agency, while I serve on the board of directors.

Since that notable exception, I have moved on to my current academic position, and seek to more fully live out those changes initiated seven years ago in that small group experience. Since the move three years ago, my family and I have been attending what can perhaps best be described as a post-modern church, although I suppose that is somewhat of an oxymoron. It is characterized as such because of its efforts to "be a church that is not a church" and to "do church differently." Sunday morning service takes place at a community center and occurs in a coffee house atmosphere with congregants sitting at tables. There is coffee and food, brought by congregants, and persons get up freely throughout the service to re-fill their cups or plates. There is a teaching time that consists of discussion either as part of the teaching or immediately after in a question and comment format. Technology plays a large part in the life of the church, whether it involves the use of music videos, movie clips, or different kinds of visual presentations during Sunday services. The teaching messages are available online, and e-mail communications occur throughout the week. The church also makes use of an electronic discussion board through the church website that congregants can access, post comments and respond to others' comments, if they so desire. It is also a unique congregation in that, as a group, it is highly educated, with the average being at least some graduate study. There are a number of current seminary students, as well as number of seminary graduates that attend the church. There are also a number of faculty members that attend the church from the Christian university where I work, and the teaching pastor himself is on staff at the seminary.

What drew us to this church was not so much the post-modern elements, so much as the focus on the teachings of Jesus, the valuing of social justice and peace-building, and efforts to be a loving, supportive and reconciling community to each other, and to the larger social world. It is these characteristics of congregational life that I as-

sociate with the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith tradition, and so in many ways I would consider the church Anabaptist-Mennonite even though it is not a part of any of the denominations that might be included in that tradition. Thus far I have experienced greater congruence between my scholarly and congregational life, and yet there is still a tension that exists between the domains and in some ways they still function as separate spheres. The tension does not stem from a difference in theological vision because there is more unity now than has ever been before between my personal theology as expressed in my academic career and that within my congregational life. The tension results from not having had any practice at living out that theology within congregational life, apart from that notable exception. The encouraging piece is that many of the congregants voice similar thoughts, and so it is a group of persons struggling together to live out an essentially Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. While I am excited about the potential for congruence, I am aware

that the construction of separate spheres runs deep, with many layers, and I have much left to reconcile. I am also aware however that a certain amount of tension and separateness is inevitable, and in many ways is desirable because without some dialectic change is unlikely. There is a particularity to each domain that exists and needs to be maintained, and yet the domains can be brought into closer proximity or relation to each other. I look forward to seeing what happens.

*Peter Jankowski is Associate Professor of Psychology at Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota.
p-jankowski@bethel.edu*

References

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Can Scholars Form a Congregation without Dominating It?

By Thomas Lehman

The Research Triangle area of North Carolina has had two Mennonite churches for many years, in Durham and Raleigh. The third leg of the Triangle, Chapel Hill, had none until late 2001, when a small group of Anabaptists cautiously began to meet for worship once per month, then two, then three times, and finally every Sunday starting in September of 2002. This quiet, almost unannounced startup with no pastor required the founders to work out everything needed for worship and the rudiments of congregational life, and gave them much freedom.

The nucleus of the group knew each other well as members of an informal small group of the Raleigh church. However, some were unwilling to travel to Raleigh regularly for worship. In the group were three doctoral students in theology or religion, plus others pursuing M.Div. degrees at the Duke Divinity School in Durham. A few had permanent employment. With a few exceptions, the group consisted of graduate students and young professionals. Worship planning was initially undertaken by two Duke doctoral students who were confident of their ability to make things work. So was born the Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (CHMF).

The startup required steady effort of one kind or another by a majority of the worshippers. The initial worship committee, all volunteers, included just over half the

group. Preaching duties quickly became the task of five people in rotation, most with seminary or divinity school degrees completed or in progress.

Every new congregation needs to take some basic steps. One is to decide where it stands in relation to the great questions of the church. CHMF solved this very simply by accepting *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as its guiding statement. Another step is to establish a membership list, which took the young congregation two years. A regular participant wondered aloud why one should bother to define membership and draw up a list when things were going so well. The reply, that "churches have members," carried the day, whether or not it was satisfying.

An important early decision was made to preach from the Lectionary, because it requires preachers to deal seriously with Biblical material rather than to expound on topics of their own choosing. Although there was some initial hesitation, this has been very beneficial.

Sermons have typically been stimulating, and no one seems bothered by the variety of preaching styles from week to week. In 2005 the congregation published a handsome book of 28 sermons under the title *A Word in Season, how good it is!* (RosenberryBooks.com)

Twice in the last two years CHMF members have had their Christian living written up in *Christian Century*. Jonathan and Leah Wilson-Hartgrove have created a community service house in the midst of a poor neighbor-

hood in Durham; Jonathan has promoted a new Christian monasticism, and the couple is highly committed to meeting the needs of their neighbors. Fred and Elizabeth Bahnson live on a farm and raise much of their own food. Fred's skill at crop farming got him appointed to develop a large garden in a rural area. A nearby congregation wanted a garden as a means of providing food for rural poor people and building racial harmony after an unsolved murder haunted the community.

The story of these two exemplary families might have ended there, but it did not. Both couples have left CHMF in response to the time demands of the congregations closest to their respective projects. With their departures the congregation lost three preachers, two co-chairs of the worship committee, one hymn leader, one deacon, one violinist, one adorable infant, and a frequent source of fresh goat cheese. It is difficult to say farewell to gifted members who leave the congregation without moving from the area. All of these people were Mennonites by choice, and take strong Mennonite values with them to their new congregations.

Four CHMF members have recently accepted faculty appointments: Alex Sider at Bluffton University, Jennifer Connerley at James Madison University in religious history, Peter Dula at Eastern Mennonite University, and Jennifer Graber at the College of Wooster (Ohio). Chris Huebner of Canadian Mennonite University was a member of the small group that evolved into CHMF. Because he is remembered by some in the congregation, the three editors of *Polyglossia*, the new Herald Press series of books on Anabaptist theology – Dula, Huebner and Sider – can almost be regarded as CHMF alumni. All three of them wrote dissertations under Stanley Hauerwas, Duke's almost-Anabaptist icon.

Is it the mission of CHMF to nurture and encourage students during their years of graduate study, then to cheer them on as they take strong Mennonite values to distant places?

Several indicators suggest that the young scholars who laid the foundations of CHMF and established its pattern of worship have not made it into a place where only their kind feel at home. (1) None of them held faculty appointments at Duke or the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; thus they were not established authorities with scholarly reputations. (2) CHMF worship always includes time for sermon discussion, often opened by the question, "What Word have you heard from our sister or brother? Graduate students in theology have never used this time to joust or score scholarly points with each other. (3) With rare exceptions the sermon vocabularies are accessible; "pericope" is about the only discipline-specific term ever used, and only rarely. (4) Much of what binds members together occurs during the week in

small group meetings, socializing together on weekends, helping each other in numerous ways, etc. In such activities all are equal. There is a strong ethic of mutual support.

In an essay in the Fall 2006 issue of the *A-MSN Newsletter*, Lydia Neufeld Harder struggled with the dynamics of scholarly power in the congregation, but finally saw the worship experience as a one "in which power dynamics can most easily be replaced by mutuality and friendship among all of God's people." So it is in the Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship.

Postscript. Mennonites are slow to acknowledge the value to congregational members of the social interactions among them, lest they be considered a mere social club hiding under a thin veneer of doctrine. However, the experience of the Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship suggests that healthy social interactions are a major factor in building a congregation, and can even influence members to stay put rather than to seek careers elsewhere. This factor is probably more important in new or urban congregations where few members have roots. Could this merit consideration by a Mennonite looking for a dissertation topic?

Thomas Lehman is a recently retired assistant editor of Physica D, an international journal of applied mathematics. Earlier he taught chemistry at Bethel College and Bluffton University. talehman@bellsouth.net

Position Open: Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network Coordinator

The coordinator will produce and mail two newsletters per year, maintain website/membership list, collect membership dues, promote occasional conferences that the A-MSN co-sponsors. Furthermore, together with the A-MSN Steering Committee, the coordinator will explore whether and how the A-MSN might become an umbrella organization which networked among existing associations, scholars, and institutions and help to coordinate or set a scholarly agenda for the larger Mennonite church, by deliberate involvement and planning of conferences, publications, etc.

Due to the connection with the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, this position has been located in Toronto. However, it could be located elsewhere in Canada or the U.S. Start: between May 1 and September 1.

For further information, contact James Pankratz, Academic Dean, Conrad Grebel University College, pankratz@uwaterloo.ca, or 519-885-0220 ext. 24232.

“Don’t Mess with Anabaptism?” A Personal Reflection

By Paul Martens

In recent decades, self-conscious Mennonite scholars have been fixated on Mennonite, or Anabaptist, or Anabaptist-Mennonite identity like nothing else. The great texts written during this time are about “our” history, about what “we” believe, about how “we” live, or should live, or shouldn’t live...but never forget, they are about living.

Of course, one should appropriately attend to much in “our” theological and cultural history that merits attention. But, unfortunately, this fascinating and unrelenting self-interest frequently ends up ideologically seeking for that one thing (or couple of things) that differentiate Mennonites, Anabaptists, or Anabaptist-Mennonites from everyone else, thereby either: a) selfishly proscribing everyone else from thinking, believing, or participating in this one thing (or couple of things) at the risk of losing our identity; or b) identifying everyone who thinks, believes, or participates in this one thing (or couple of things) as part of “us” in order to preserve our identity.

Very simply stated, confessions of faith served the role of providing identity parameters in the early years, and embracing a certain group of complementary convictions – expressed idiosyncratically in time and location – qualified one as an Anabaptist. Over time, membership in a particular denomination (usually some form of Mennonite) superceded attention to a confession of faith, and denominational adherence served as the marker through which identity was understood. Since at least the mid-twentieth century, however, denominational identity has slowly withered, leaving “our” identity in flux and instigating the search for the kernel of Anabaptism. Whether “we” provided three markers for our vision or one central practice, a refined trans-denominational criterion has been sought for the purpose of isolating what is uniquely Anabaptist from the rich matrix that the tradition has given “us.” Although this practice was and is well-intentioned, it often comes off shallow and radically insufficient, and the result essentially invites pigeonholing Anabaptists with peace in the same caricaturing fashion that Calvinism is identified with predestination, Lutheranism with faith alone, and Catholicism with works-righteousness.

If one does not want to rewrite the entire tradition in terms of this one identifying criteria of peace, one is then forced to revisit the existing resources within the diverse history of Anabaptism that contextualize and define opposition to violence. And, very quickly, one finds that there is much in our tradition that is not uniquely “ours,” but that Anabaptists have always shared much with

Christians who are Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic...or part of other free-church traditions. And, it is precisely this blurring of Anabaptist identity that is either good or bad, depending on what one wants to emphasize.

Three weeks ago, in order to fulfill what I take to be God’s leading to Baylor University, I transferred my membership from a Canadian Inter-Mennonite Fellowship to a Baptist church in Texas. Some of my family and friends have been surprised by my willingness to join a non-Mennonite church (fear of stereotypical America-worshipping, fundamentalist, gun-slinging southern Baptists usually implied but unstated). But, as much as I will miss the familiarity of the Mennonite family, I was ready to accept this denominational transition long before it was a possibility, which brings me back to the issue of Anabaptist identity.

As I see it, I have joined a different ecclesial history (which has its own excesses), yet the theological identity has remained very similar. The focus on Jesus within the divine work of salvation looks very similar; the centrality of the Bible remains intact; discipleship is valued highly; the emphasis on service rivals any I have experienced; commitment to the priesthood of all believers is alive and well; the practice of baptism upon confession of faith is present; the symbolic nature of communion is well-articulated...and the list goes on.

But, the inevitable question from my Anabaptist friends: “what about pacifism?” Yes, most Texas Baptists are not pacifists, but I have met many that are. As I have argued for several years, non-violence is an expression of discipleship dependant on other theological claims about how God works and calls us to work (which also assumes that the Bible is relevant and prescriptive in some fashion). This is to say that pacifism is not the beginning but a subsequent conclusion derived through theological reflection. Unsurprisingly, this sort of reflection is also encouraged in my new Baptist family, thereby providing the acceptable biblical and theological context and parameters from which the rejection of violence can be articulated...which is precisely how the early Anabaptists came to their conclusions: the theological articulation gave birth to and justified the practice of non-violence (and not vice-versa).

I accept that I can no longer use the term Mennonite in a denominational sense (ignoring for the moment the contested ethnic definition of Mennonite). But, does this mean that I am not allowed to use the term Anabaptist for myself? As James McClendon sought to reconcile Baptists and Anabaptists by postulating a “baptist” resolution, perhaps an “anabaptist” resolution could also be suggested? While acknowledging the difficulties with

this small proposal, it is again helpful to remember the larger Christian context: as all in the western hemisphere who are not Catholic, we continually have to justify our reforming stance outside of Catholicism first before getting into our intramural squabbles. Starting in this way helps us see how much we do have in common, and what our real differences are.

A quarter of a century ago, a new slogan was needed to help preserve the rich, natural beauty of Texas from harmful human waste of all kinds. The result: "Don't Mess with Texas." Today, that very same slogan means something else, something defensive, something arrogant, something self-assured, and ultimately, something offensive. The designation of "Anabaptist" has histori-

cally referred to a complex and valuable movement that has attempted to preserve a particular understanding of the unity of God's work in history and the appropriate human response. There are moments today when I wonder whether this has been lost in the service of dividing "us" from "them" for practical and political purposes. In the end, for the reasons outlined above, I still hope that identifying myself as an Anabaptist is acceptable, even if "Baptist" has now become the acceptable denominational nomenclature.

Paul Martens is assistant professor of religion at Baylor University, Waco, TX. Paul_Martens@baylor.edu

Research Notes

I am a senior scholar at the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, CT and a research fellow, Yale Divinity School, January-April 2007. One of my research projects is to prepare a paper to be presented at the Seminar für Mittlere und Neuere Geschichte of the University of Göttingen, to be held at the Conference Centre of the Unitas Fratrum, Herrnhut, Germany October 3-6, 2007 on "The Influence of the Pietist Concept of Mission on the first two American Mission Societies—The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) and the Baptist Missionary Society (1814)."

Wilbert R. Shenk
Fuller Theological Seminary
wshenk@fuller.edu

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My sabbatical project (Spring 2007) involves transforming my NT Theology lecture notes into a book. The aim is to fill a gap by providing a NT Theology that is historical, theological, and thematic. My Romans commentary, *God is One and God is Fair*, was published in November 2006 (Kindred Productions), completing a project that I began during my first sabbatical (Fall 2003). The Romans commentary aims to read the letter through the lens of the so-called "new perspective" on Paul and make the result accessible at a popular level.

Jon Isaak
MB Biblical Seminary, Fresno, CA
jisaak@mbseminary.edu

My current project is a book manuscript with a working title: "Kingdom, Power, and Glory: What Christians in Globalization Can Learn from Paul in the Roman Empire." 2007 is the publishing goal.

Linford Stutzman
Eastern Mennonite University
stutzmal@emu.edu

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I would be keenly interested in talking to anyone working in the area of fundraising and theology, particularly from an Anabaptist perspective. I am starting my MTS thesis at Conrad Grebel, looking at why people donate money to Mennonite institutions and also asking Mennonite development officers which values they appeal to when asking for money. Then, I want to explore the intersection of these present-day motivations with Paul's motivations for giving to his Collection for Jerusalem, with 2 Corinthians, Romans and Philippians being the obvious texts. Any leads welcome; I haven't seen much published in this area.

Lori Guenther Reesor
Conrad Grebel University College
ozmenno@gmail.com

I have recently returned from a half year sabbatical editing and writing commentaries on the 51 pieces in the 1561 *Kunstbuch* of the Pilgram Marpeck Circle, a collection of pastoral letters and meditations compiled to guide the Marpeck congregations after his death. The views represented extend from writers close to Marpeck's incarnationism (his way of shaping an alternative to both sacramentalism and spiritualism) to those close to spiritualism. This breadth of range raises questions about the coherence and stability of the Marpeck Circle. Was it really an urban Anabaptist alternative to spiritualistic and legalistic streams of Anabaptism? Or did it remain a tentative alliance without staying power? Contact with others with an interest in this agenda would be welcome.

John Rempel
Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
jrempe1@ambs.edu

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During a 2007-2008 sabbatical I plan to complete an English language version of the history of the Javanese Mennonite Church, the title of which has not yet been determined. This work is based on an Indonesian language history of these churches written by Drs. Sigit Heru Soekotjo and myself, which has not yet been published. The Javanese Mennonite Church is also called the Evangelical Church of Java, a direct translation of its official Indonesian language name, Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa—GITJ. This synod of churches is the outgrowth of the work of Dutch Mennonite Mission Society missionaries who began work in north Central Java in 1852 in the coastal town of Jepara. The first missionary was Pieter Jansz. Many missionaries from the Kirchliche Mennonite churches in Russia and also later from Germany and Switzerland were sent under the Dutch board to work in Java. A large, strongly indigenous Javanese Christian movement grew up in the same area under the leadership of Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung, which after the death of this leader in 1885 was largely incorporated into the Mennonite Mission church, as was some Reformed mission work in the area. The synod was organized in 1940 with a name that can be translated "Union of Gospel-Pattern Christian Churches in the Jepara, Pati and Kudus Residencies." This represented an interesting effort to say "Doopsgezind," "Mennonite" or "Anabaptist" in non-technical terms. The synod now consists of 99 mature churches and many branches in Java and Sumatra.

Lawrence M. Yoder
Eastern Mennonite Seminary
yoderlm@emu.edu

I am currently in the research stage of my doctoral program at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Prof. Ian Hazlett. I am evaluating sixteenth-century Anabaptist literary access to patristic writings/thought. The contextual items I am analyzing for this project are Anabaptist contact with and the influence of Erasmus as well as educational backgrounds that facilitate the humanist ethos as the method by which Anabaptists reverted to apostolic authority and faithful classical witness; the "typical" dating of the "fall" of the church and the Anabaptist attitude towards the ecclesiology and theological insight and proficiency of Christian writers prior to this date; the influence of the *Devotio moderna* and the origin of their similar priorities as well as exposure to patristic anthologies and the effect of Anabaptist educational backgrounds that led to priestly and monastic vocations. The study will also assess overt citations of the Church Fathers in Anabaptist works as well as perhaps more tacit similarities in thought within the context of the aforementioned methodological items. I also completed an essay entitled "Retaining and Reclaiming the Divine: Identification and the Recapitulation of Peace in Irenaeus of Lyons' Atonement Narrative," which will be included as a chapter in a new book that investigates the identification motif in atonement theology: Brad Jersak, ed. *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (Freshwind Press, 2007) to be released in the fall. For more information, visit www.geocities.com/apklager and click on "Current Projects."

Andrew Klager
University of Glasgow
a.klager.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Announcement

Canadian Mennonite University has introduced a new MA Program in Theological Studies. The new program, which will begin with courses in the New and Old Testaments, ethics, theology and a history of confessions and creeds, is aimed at those "who want to do some solid biblical study, who want to explore more deeply why they think and live the way they do," says Gordon Matties, adding that it is also a "stepping stone for current undergraduate students who want to go on to doctoral studies in theology or biblical studies." Students will be able to take courses at other local schools through the Winnipeg Theological Cooperative. For more information, contact Gordon Matties, head of CMU's Biblical and Theological Studies program, gmatties@cmu.ca.

Call for Papers

Paul and Politics

2008 Janzen Lectureship & Symposium celebrating the work of John E. Toews, **March 28–29, 2008**, 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 may critically engaged Toews' scholarship (issues, themes, approaches, etc.), or may reflect on his contribution to the church or to higher education as teacher or administrator.

Send proposals of no more than 200 words and a one-page CV with full contact information and institutional affiliation to Dr. Laura Schmidt Roberts, lroberts@fresno.edu by **September 15, 2007**.

The day following the symposium, March 30, is open for excursions to Yosemite, San Francisco, or the Central Coast.

Transitions

Paul Doerksen defended his Ph.D. dissertation, "Beyond Suspicion: Post-Christendom Protestant Political Theology in the Thought of John Howard Yoder and Oliver O'Donovan," Religious Studies Department, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON.

Journal

Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology

Published by the Institute of Mennonite Studies at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and the Institute for Theology and the Church at Canadian Mennonite University
Vol. 8, Number 1 (Spring 2007): Reconciling (edited by Irma Fast Dueck)

Vol. 8, Number 2 (Fall 2007): Suffering (edited by Gayle Gerber Koontz)

To subscribe contact visionsubscribe@ambs.edu or vision@cmu.ca. Or see www.mennovision.org.

Book Notes

Mark Baker, ed. *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross: Contemporary Images of Atonement*. Baker Academic, 2006.

Leah Dawn Bueckert and **Daniel S. Schipani**, eds. *Spiritual Caregiving in the Hospital: Windows to Chaplaincy Ministry*. Pandora Press in collaboration with Institute of Mennonites Studies, 2006.

Ted Grimsrud. *Embodying the Way of Jesus: Anabaptist Convictions for the Twenty-First Century*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007.

Chris K. Huebner. *A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity*. Herald Press, 2006.

Leo Hartschorn. *Interpretation and Preaching as Communal and Dialogical Practices: An Anabaptist Perspective*. Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.

August H. Konkkel. *1 & 2 Kings*. New International Version Application Commentary. Zondervan, 2006.

August H. Konkkel. *Job*. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Series. Tyndale House, 2006.

Willard M. Swartley. *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics*. Eerdmans, 2006.

David Wright, with James E. Clemens, composer. *A Field of Voices: Hymns for Worship*. Table Round Press, 2007.

Electronic resource: *Take our Moments and our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book* will release guides to prayer for the seasons of the church year on the AMBS web site through this year. See www.ambs.edu/prayerbook for Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost guides to prayer, along with Advent, Christmas, Christmas Week, New Year's Day and Epiphany. *Take our Moments and our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book* for Ordinary Time will be published from Herald Press this year. Editors are Eleanor Kreider, Arthur Paul Boers, Mary H. Schertz, John Rempel and Barbara Nelson Gingerich. Willard M. Swartley serves as consultant for scripture selections.

Conferences

“Inheriting John Howard Yoder: A New Generation Examines his Thought”

May 25–26, 2007, Toronto, ON

This conference is organized by the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, and will be held at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. The conference will include papers both critical and appreciative from a variety of disciplines, perspectives and religious traditions; as well as panel discussions on recently published books, and a forum on “Teaching Yoder.” Early registration by May 1. Schedule and registration information is available at www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/tmtc/

“The Amish in America: New Identities and Diversities”

June 7–9, 2007, Elizabethtown, PA

An international conference will be held at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College. Plenary sessions: “Understanding the Amish in 20th Century America,” Paul S. Boyer, University of Wisconsin; “Who Are the Real Amish?: New Identities and Diversities,” Steven M. Nolt, Goshen College; “Completing the Plain Puzzle: Old Orders in Canada and Latin America,” Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg; “Cultural Interventions: Lessons from the Amish,” D. Holmes Morton, The Clinic for Special Children in Strasburg, PA. www.etown.edu/YoungCenter.aspx

“Who Do We Think We Are? Catholics and Mennonites Growing Together in Christ”

July 26–29, 2007, Elkhart, IN

Bridgefolk, a gathering of Mennonites and Catholics, will hold its annual conference at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary; www.bridgefolk.net/conferences/

Mennonite-Catholic Theological Conference—“Called Together To Be Peacemakers”

July 30–31, 2007, South Bend, IN

This conference is designed to generate theological engagement of the document, “Called Together To Be Peacemakers,” the fruit of the Mennonite and Catholic International Dialogue, 1998-2003. It will be held at the University of Notre Dame. For further information, please contact Margaret Pfeil at (574) 631-9378, Mpfeil1@nd.edu.

“Honoring a Legacy, Embracing a Future: Three Hundred Years of Brethren Heritage”

October 11-13, 2007, Elizabethtown, PA

Organized by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College www.etown.edu/YoungCenter.aspx

“Mennonites, Family & Sexuality in Historical Perspective”

October 12–13, 2007, Waterloo, ON

An academic and community education conference will be hosted by Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo; sponsored by Institute of Anabaptist Mennonite Studies (CGUC), Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada. See: www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/academic/iams/ or email Marlene Epp: mgepp@uwaterloo.ca.

16th Believers Church Conference

June 11–14, 2008, Winnipeg, MB

This conference will be held at Canadian Mennonite University, on the theme, “Congregationalism, Denominationalism, and the Body of Christ.” Further information and a call for papers will be forthcoming.

“Anabaptist Convictions After Marpeck”

June 26–28, 2009, Bluffton, OH

The 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 will be forthcoming.