



Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre

TMTC NOW



A. James Reimer (1942-2010)

TMTC lost its founder and Academic Advisor, Jim Reimer, in August. His academic project was to define Mennonite theology within the broader Christian tradition. Two of his other passions were to engage in dialogue with communist scholars from Eastern Europe, and, more recently, with Muslim scholars from Iran. One of his chief areas of interest was German theology during the Hitler era. Jim was a dedicated professor and a funny, warm-hearted man with a deep love for the church. He died two days after singing high tenor with his bluegrass band, Five-on-the-Floor. He will be missed.

Christians and War reviewed by Susan Kennel Harrison

In his concise and accessible book, *Christians and War* (2010), the late A. James Reimer provides us with a chronological account of "arguments, teachings, and practices concerning Christian participation in violence, war, and peacemaking from the biblical period to the present, in a way that is accessible to non-specialists" (viii). Divided into thirteen chapters and a conclusion, this book is ideal for use in a semester course. Two of the initial chapters provide an overview of the biblical passages that have shaped Christian attitudes to war and peace. Next, Reimer proceeds through key historical eras, particularly those of western Christianity, to highlight the influence of early Christian practices, key thinkers and both the Roman Catholic and Protestant ecumenical doctrinal positions. A unique and effective aspect of his approach is his inclusion of minority groups such as the Mennonites and Quakers. Another of the book's strengths is the way he brings together contrasting Christian perspectives, giving attention to recent Canadian and American theologies.

Highlighting the significant shifts within western Christian thinking due to the two World Wars, Reimer shows how the development of nuclear weapons, international terrorism, and the recent discourse on human rights and the responsibility to protect, are all posing new challenges to traditional just war theologies and sectarian pacifist positions. The chapter on nuclear pacifism could have included an acknowledgement of the significant work for disarmament done by the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. The absence of any discussion of Liberation Theology is also notable, particularly since it demands that justice be an active element of peace and it raises consciousness about the social location of theologians of war and peace. Since Reimer places "some liberation movements" in his holy war/crusade typology (9) more explanation and nuance is called for in his exposition. Another voice that would strengthen his later sections is that of Canadian Quaker Ursula Franklin who has written extensively on the relationship of modern war technologies, globalization, social justice and peacemaking. This book serves its objectives well and can be used for instruction on the varieties of Christian approaches to the morality of war and attitudes toward peace throughout history.



Note from the Director

by Jim Pankratz, Dean and Associate Professor, Conrad Grebel University College

My sabbatical research (July-December 2010) examined the encounter of Mennonite missionaries with Hinduism in India. The primary research was archival. I investigated how Mennonite missionaries understood and described Hinduism in their official reports, in articles and letters to Mennonite publications, in books, in speeches and sermons, and in their personal correspondence and journals. This archival research was complemented by examination of a considerable body of scholarly and other secondary sources, especially travel accounts and biographies. The research was conducted in Mennonite Brethren (MB) archives in Winnipeg Manitoba, Hillsboro Kansas, and Fresno California, and in Mennonite Church archives in Goshen Indiana and Newton Kansas. The library at Grebel has a good collection of Mennonite periodicals in print and microfilm, so I am able to continue reading through several of these German and English periodicals.

I will highlight two findings from my research.

First, missionaries significantly shaped the understanding of India among North American Mennonites. The missionaries used Mennonite periodicals as primary vehicles for communicating with their constituencies and for interpreting Indian religion to them. They also commented on the social and political life around them. They were in India during a period of several major regional famines, the independence movement (which included the civil disobedience movement led by Gandhi), and two world wars. They wrote hundreds of reports and letters to the editors. One MB missionary, for example, was in India for thirty-four years, and during that time nearly 400 of his letters and articles were published in the *Zionsbote*.

Second, during the time when Mennonites were establishing missions in India, they were also establishing missions among North American "Indians". I am selectively examining some of the reports and correspondence related to those missions to determine if they illuminate patterns and assumptions that may characterize other Mennonite mission endeavours. I look forward to returning to this research more intensively this summer.



Ryan Schellenberg, the Coordinator and Newsletter Editor of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network, is finishing his term of 4 years this Spring. He will be replaced by Sarah Freeman.

TMTC Women's Group by Sarah Freeman

For the past two years, the women of TMTC have met once a month during the school year. The gatherings are informal and anywhere from 2 to 15 women often come and go throughout a two-hour space of time. The group discusses whatever concerns or areas of interest the women bring to the gathering. Discussions include course selections, funding, and the relationship between church and academia, to name a few examples. The University of Toronto, including the various colleges and theological departments, can be difficult to navigate and the women's group is a valuable means of advice and wisdom when navigating the university and attempting to survive the rigors of papers, comprehensive exams, and thesis proposals. This group is also a source of personal support. Conversations include balancing family life with studying and the challenges of being a Mennonite woman in academia. The women have a wealth of personal, scholarly, professional and family experience and this gathering provides an opportunity to encourage, share with and support one another through all of the travails of academic life.



Photo (from left to right): Susan Kennel Harrison, Christina Reimer, Marilyn Zehr, Sarah Freeman



Life After TMTC by Jeremy Bergen

I was hired at Conrad Grebel University College almost three years ago to teach theology in the MTS program and in the Religious Studies department of the University of Waterloo.

I am very fortunate to work in supportive, collegial setting, to teach what I love, and to be given meaningful challenges so early in my career such as directing masters' theses and

editing *The Conrad Grebel Review*. I don't need to say that the job market is very competitive. I know that a combination of factors, most of them far out of my control, resulted in this job. There's no formula for success, however success is defined.

As I look back on the transition from one side of the classroom to the other, three elements of my graduate student experience were especially important for me—chances to teach, a fruitful area of research, and opportunities for professionalization. TMTC was crucial for these latter two. First, the TMTC Fellows Group helped me to think about why and how to work on a dissertation of broad interest and relevance. (A book based on it—*Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts*—has just been published by T&T Clark.) Secondly, given the importance in academe of building relationships and fostering conversations, the opportunity TMTC provided me to figure out how to convene events such as the Graduate Student Conferences and the Yoder Conference, and translate these into publications, is a gift for which I am deeply grateful.

Upcoming Event

Life, Land, and Community

5th Mennonite Graduate Student Conference

Conrad Grebel University College
August 5-7, 2011

Once thought as the 'quiet in the land,' Mennonites are increasingly considering what it means to live responsibly on the land, sometimes even within the concrete confines of the city. "The land," broadly conceived, signifies a movement toward sustainability and interrelatedness that encompasses both urban and rural realities. Also, land is not simply about farming, but about location, community, quality of existence, and justice. The topic Life, Land, and Community is a way of framing the current term "agrarianism" and is meant to be broad and inclusive of many academic disciplines. Registration begins soon!

Hosted by TMTC

Interview with Sarah Freeman by Christina Reimer

Sarah Freeman, this year's winner of the A. James Reimer award, is a doctoral student in the field of homiletics at the Toronto School of Theology. Homiletics, she jokes, is just "a fancy word for preaching," which, she explains, is a unique art form that involves a diverse methodology, including effective speech communication, rigorous and relevant theology, and strong scriptural exegesis.

Sarah is currently in the process of finishing her comprehensive exams and writing her thesis proposal. Her thesis project focuses on the work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and John Howard Yoder and attempts to root preaching in a theology of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

Some of the particular themes that Sarah explores are suffering for the sake of others and how we use the imagination and remembrance to transform unjust and violent practices. She states that we cannot work towards goals, such as peace, that we cannot imagine. Preaching, she says, should contribute "creative solutions to problems" and "provide visions of what the world and the church could be." She also says that through acts of remembrance, we can "look back and recall stories of transformation and non-violent struggle as proof of what the Holy Spirit has already done." These acts of remembrance can "empower us in the present." Sarah believes that a preacher should also verse herself in local, congregational histories, finding "inspirational" stories about how "particular churches have started and grown."

Sarah grounds her academic work in her church work, enjoying guest preaching in numerous congregations. She also leads church workshops on preaching. She says that while Mennonites believe in the priesthood of all believers, the Protestant affirmation that everyone can read and interpret the Bible for themselves, and the empowerment of the laity to preach, we do not adequately "provide preachers with the foundations for good, effective preaching." How we hear and communicate the word, in other words, is a theological issue that deserves to be explored by academics, pastors and the laity. As an associate member of TMTC, Sarah has appreciated connecting with other Mennonite graduate students, particularly since Mennonites don't have a college or regular worship services on campus. She affectionately refers to TMTC as her "foster college." This summer, Sarah will begin her positions as the Coordinator of both TMTC and the Anabaptist Scholars Network.



Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre

"TMTC helps form theological leadership for the church by providing and supporting graduate theological education, particularly at the doctoral level, from a Mennonite perspective in an ecumenical context."

IN TORONTO:

- Graduate courses and student advising
- Ecumenical conversations (e.g., Mennonite-Catholic dialogue)
- Special lectures and panels
- Scholars' Forum (for local and visiting students and faculty to present research and receive feedback)
- A. James Reimer Award (an annual doctoral scholarship)

AND ACROSS NORTH AMERICA:

- Graduate student conferences
- Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network
- AAR/SBL academic forums
- Muslim-Christian dialogue
- Conferences and consultations
- Sabbatical residence for visiting faculty

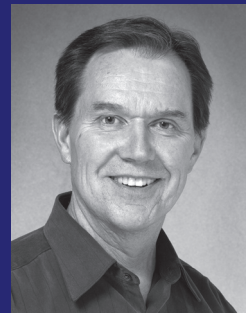
Founded in 1990, TMTC is now administered by Conrad Grebel University College on behalf of a bi-national Mennonite constituency represented by an Advisory Council. TMTC does not admit students, nor grant degrees, but they may register as Associate Members (see website for details). Graduates may also be TMTC Associates. Students who are Associates are normally registered at one of the local graduate institutions, primarily the Toronto School of Theology, an ecumenical consortium at the University of Toronto, as well as graduate degree institutions in the region extending to Hamilton, Waterloo and the rest of the Greater Toronto Area.

To make a donation to TMTC, please make cheques payable to *Conrad Grebel University College*, specifying 'TMTC' in the memo line. Interested donors from the US may contact TMTC's Director.



TMTC Staff:

Jim Pankratz,
Director



Christina Reimer
Coordinator



Thank you, Christina for your leadership as Coordinator during 2010-11. It was a good year.

On behalf of TMTC Associates and the Advisory Council,
Jim Pankratz

Advisory Council:

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
Canadian Mennonite University
Eastern Mennonite University
Mennonite Church Canada
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
Mennonite Education Agency
(Mennonite Church USA)

TMTC Administered by:
Conrad Grebel University College

Contact Information:

Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre
47 Queen's Park Cres. East
Toronto, ON
M5S 2C3
(416) 978-6078
mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca
www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/tmtc