



Toronto Mennonite
Theological Centre

A graduate teaching and research centre of Conrad Grebel University College

TEXTS, EXPERIENCES, INTERPRETATIONS

8th Biennial Graduate Student Conference
June 14–16, 2018 | Toronto, Ontario

Welcome to Toronto!

Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre Eighth Biennial Graduate Student Conference

June 14th – 16th, 2018

The Neighbourhood

We are located right in the heart of Toronto, bordering the provincial legislature's grounds, right next to the Annex, Yorkville, and Church & Wellesley neighbourhoods. A wander through the U of T campus will give you a chance to take in some beautiful historic buildings, art galleries, and open spaces (Note: it is convocation weekend for some colleges, so it will likely be busy in certain areas).

Anything you might need while you're attending the conference is probably nearby (including 24-hour food places if you need a snack while you're making late-night revisions to your conference paper...). While typical precautions are always a good idea, the areas surrounding the U of T campus are quite safe.

Other Toronto questions? Pablo, Trent, and Allison on the planning committee all live in town and would be happy to help point you in the right direction.

Scholars' Night Out

Thursday evening we will head down Toronto's Waterfront and enjoy a night out at Amsterdam Brewhouse. TMTC will be providing some food for the group, and any drinks you may wish to enjoy will be on individual bills.

Amsterdam Brewhouse is located at 245 Queen's Quay West; it can be reached easily by transit (taking Line 1 from Museum southbound to Union Station), or a 40-minute walk from the TST building. Worried about finding your way there? Don't be! A group of us will be making our way down together. Getting there independently? Please plan to arrive at Amsterdam by 9:00pm.

Transit

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) works on a flat fare, proof-of-payment system for the buses and subways in the city. A single fare is \$3.25. Pay your cash fare when you board a bus or subway and make sure to obtain a transfer (from the driver on a bus, or from a red transfer machine at a subway station) as your proof of payment. You can use your transfer to change from the subway to buses or streetcars at connecting points.

Doing a bit more exploring? A day pass covers two adults traveling together on the weekend, costs \$12.50, and allows for unlimited trips. A day pass can be purchased either from a subway station or through the TTC Connect app.

The closest subway stations to us are Museum Station (Line 1) and Bay Station (Line 2).

If you are taking transit to/from Toronto Pearson, the 192 Express Bus connects the airport to the subway at Kipling Station (Line 2, western most stop). Allow 45-60 minutes between campus and YYZ.

WIFI

If your institution is part of eduroam you can connect with your home institution login. If you don't have access to eduroam, you can connect to TST guest wifi:




Network Name: tsthotel
Password: tst2014W

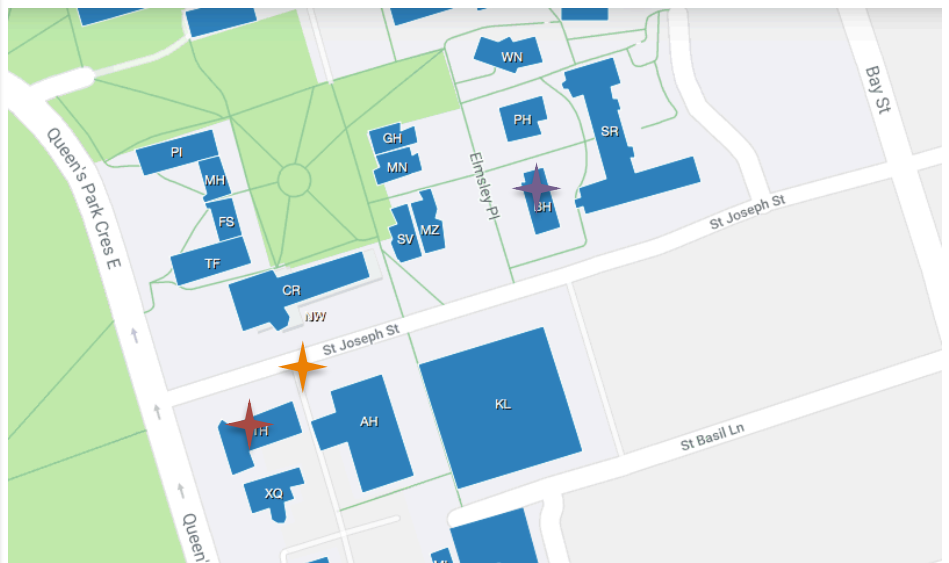
Parking

The easiest place to park your car is in the lot directly behind the Toronto School of Theology (entrance off St. Joseph Street). The lot has separate day, evening, and overnight rates. Payment is made to the on-site attendant. There is limited free overnight parking on some of the side streets surrounding campus (Charles Street, St. Mary Street, Hoskin Avenue)—just be aware of what time you will need to move your car in the morning to avoid a ticket!



Where We Will Be

-  Sessions – Toronto School of Theology
-  Meals – The Canada Room, Brennan Hall
-  Entrance to Parking Lot



Texts, Experiences, Interpretations: Eighth Biennial Graduate Student Conference

Schedule

Thursday, June 14th

17:00–18:30 **Arrival and registration**

18:30–18:45 **Welcome**

18:45–20:45 **Concurrent sessions**

A: **Carl Friesen**, University of Notre Dame, “The Unnaturalness of Creation-Care in Christian Environmental Ethics”

Colin Friesen, Conrad Grebel University College, “Resurrection and Miscarriage: An Eschatological Theology for Child Loss and Infertility”

Grant Miller, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, “Boundaries of the Religious and Secular: Contextual Renegotiation of Mennonite Peace Theology”

B: **Emily Buck**, Fuller Theological Seminary, “Do This in Remembrance of Me” Balthasar Hubmaier’s Conception of Remembrance in the Lord’s Supper”

Lois Klassen, Carey Theological College, “Bearing the Cross” in the Theology of John Calvin”

Breanna Nickel, University of Notre Dame, “Balthasar Hubmaier’s “Scholastic” Experience: Reconstructing his Freiburg Years”

21:00–23:00 **Scholars night out at Amsterdam Brewhouse**

Friday, June 15th

8:30–9:30 **Breakfast**

9:30–10:00 **Morning prayer**

10:00–11:30 **Joint session: Sarah Johnson**, University of Notre Dame, “Shaping the Sung Theology of the Future Mennonite Church”

12:00–13:00 **Lunch**

13:30–15:30 **Concurrent sessions**

A: **Tyler Campbell**, University of Dayton, “Sunshine Inc. and Little Flower Catholic Parish: Ecumenism in the Contemporary Group Home”

Jason Reimer Greig, VU Amsterdam/TMTC, “Honouring the Time of the Body: Towards a Renewed Ecclesial Practice of Footwashing in a High-Speed Age”

Daniel Rempel, Canadian Mennonite University, “Karl Barth's Theology as a Framework for Disability Theology”

B: **Sarah Bixler**, Princeton Theological Seminary, “The Self Unveiled: The Dis-integration of Mennonite Women’s Head Coverings”

Gerald Ens, McMaster University, "An Appeal for an Ethnographic Mennonite Theology: Church as the Text-ure of Theological Interpretation"

Russ Snyder-Penner, Conrad Grebel University College, "Daemonic Reality in the Chaos Theologies of Catherine Keller and Karl Barth"

15:30–16:00

Coffee break

16:00–17:20

Concurrent sessions

A: **Zac Klassen**, McMaster University, "'Do Not Touch Me': Ritual Impurity in Origen of Alexandria's Interpretation of the Ascension"

Giacomo Sanfilippo, Trinity College, "Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy: An Anabaptist-Orthodox Conversation on Tradition and *Theosis*"

B: **Karsten Snitker**, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, "Traci West's Womanist Christian Ethics and the Violence of Christian 'Whiteness'"

Luis Marcos Tapia, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, "Christian nonviolence Here and Now: William Stringfellow's Rejection of an Ideological Pacifism"

17:30–18:30

Supper

19:00–20:30

Keynote lecture: Lydia Neufeld Harder, TMTC, "Naming God: The Ultimate Challenge"

Saturday, June 16th

8:30–9:30

Breakfast

9:30–10:00

Morning prayer

10:00–12:00

Concurrent sessions

A: **Benjamin Bixler**, Drew University, "What is the Value of the Hebrew Bible?: Anabaptist Christocentrism and the Hebrew Bible"

Micah Funk, St. Michael's College, "Communal Response to Systemic Injustice: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant"

Trent Voth, Emmanuel College, "Due the Right Thing: Correcting the Misinterpretation of Eve in 1 Timothy 2.11-15"

B: **Max Kennel**, McMaster University, "Beyond the Crisis and Fatigue of Mennonite Identity"

Joshua Nightengale, Canadian Mennonite University, "Trauma in the Presence of God"

12:00–13:00

Lunch

13:30–15:00

Keynote respondent workshop: Carol Penner, Conrad Grebel University College, "Conferences, Experiences, Interpretations"

Abstracts (grouped by session)

Thursday, June 14th

Concurrent sessions from 18:45–20:45

Concurrent A:

Carl Friesen, University of Notre Dame, “The Unnaturalness of Creation-Care in Christian Environmental Ethics”

Abstract: The Christian penchant for otherworldliness or disregard for the social, political, environmental aspects of the Christian narrative has been roundly criticized since at least the mid-twentieth century. Scholars from nearly every stream of the Christian tradition seem to agree that the redemption inaugurated in and by Jesus Christ extends beyond the spiritual life of the believer to include all of present reality. This movement toward fundamental concern for everyday life has often included an emphasis on care for the natural world. Theologians as diverse as Sallie McFague, Norman Wirzba, Mark Graham, Jonathan Merritt, and Michael Northcott, among many others, contend that nature is not simply so much raw material for human exploitation. Rather, human beings have a mandate to care for or steward creation because it is God’s gift to us rather than something we possess. The contemporary Christian mantra with respect to nature is thus frequently encapsulated in the term “creation-care.” Yet, environmentalists Lisa Sideris and Wes Jackson illustrate that the diverse manifestations of this dominant approach in Christian ethics suffers from two critical, concomitant deficiencies: on the one hand, it is premised on the problematically anthropocentric notion that humans can outthink the ancient structures and functions of natural ecosystems and, on the other, natural processes are neglected as a source of moral normativity. Christian moral reflection on environmental ethics implicitly perpetuates destructive environmental practices as a result. What is needed instead, I argue, is an ecologically informed re-appropriation of the Christian natural law tradition. Drawing on the work of thinkers like Sideris, Jackson, Aldo Leopold, and Jean Porter, I begin to sketch such a moral framework and suggest that the practices of what some have called “regenerative agriculture” offer a practical case study in ecological natural law.

Colin Friesen, Conrad Grebel University College, “Resurrection and Miscarriage: An Eschatological Theology for Child Loss and Infertility”

Abstract: A common Christian assumption regarding eschatology and the afterlife envisions a disembodied “heavenly” existence. We imagine those who have passed away being transformed into angelic spirits, confident in the assertion that they are experiencing a blissful, albeit vague, life in the clouds. However, this eschatology starts to fall apart when one experiences the unique loss of miscarriage. This dualistic vision of exchanged roles (a mundane, earthly, physical existence exchanged for a transcendent, heavenly, spiritual existence) lacks the ability to address those who have gone through miscarriage and is unable to provide a theology for what has happened in the miscarriage. Not only is this vision insufficient in a pastoral context, it is incompatible with the New Testament’s eschatological hope in the resurrection of the dead. Bodily resurrection is not only the proper eschatological claim of the New Testament, it is a superior framework in addressing the loss of miscarriage.

Starting with an examination of the disorientation of miscarriage, we will see how scholars and theologians like Serene Jones and Millicent Feske have struggled with coming to grips with reproductive loss. Following the arguments of N.T. Wright and John E. Thiel, we will see how there is a deep confusion regarding the afterlife, but the New Testament is convinced that the resurrection from the dead is the proper Christian eschatology. In the resurrection of Jesus, we can start to imagine what the New Creation

might be like. Even the ancient church voices of Augustine and Origen have much to offer us now. Finally, passages like Paul's great resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians 15, and the dramatic conclusion of Revelation 21 and 22 all paint a picture of what Christian eschatology is supposed to look like, and how even miscarriage can be redeemed in this Christian vision.

Grant Miller, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, "Boundaries of the Religious and Secular: Contextual Renegotiation of Mennonite Peace Theology"

Abstract: William T. Cavanaugh asserts that the separation of church and state presupposes religion to be a distinct and independent entity, incapable of cooperating with civil discourse or rational logic. The myth of religious violence and rise of the modern nation-state as a corrective response, resulted in the construction of the "religious" and the "secular." Their separation into private and public spheres to avoid violent conflict is a product of modernity itself. Therefore, the relationship between the religious and the secular is not fixed but fluid. This essay explores how Anabaptist Mennonites have negotiated the relationship between the religious and secular in the past and continue to do so in the present. In the 20th century, Mennonites in North America encountered new contexts that required a reevaluation of their peace theology and renegotiation of the boundaries between the religious and the secular. The concern for effective peacebuilding that emerged acted as a primary catalyst that precipitated those changing boundaries. A remarkable shift may have developed again as Mennonites confront the reality of sexual abuse in the church and its institutions. The stories and perspectives on sexual abuse and prevention, recorded on the website *Our Stories Untold*, offer differing constructions of the religious and secular that simultaneously introduce new frameworks and reaffirm old ones; however, in trying to integrate multiple approaches, advocates of this new conception must offer a theological account that informs the new relationship they propose.

Concurrent B:

Emily Buck, Fuller Theological Seminary, "Do This in Remembrance of Me" Balthasar Hubmaier's Conception of Remembrance in the Lord's Supper"

Abstract: This paper seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the early Anabaptist theologian Balthasar Hubmaier's interpretation of what it means "to remember" in the Lord's Supper by engaging his context and practices surrounding the Supper, and concluding that he displays an affinity with ancient Hebrew modes of memory. To achieve this, I lay the groundwork by exploring Hubmaier's relations with the Catholic Church and with other reforming view points, namely his rejection of the mass as a sacrifice and of Christ's "Real Presence" in the Supper, as well as showing the influence of Ulrich Zwingli. Then, I examine Hubmaier's theology of the Supper as expressed in his liturgy, discovering that his view of the Supper has an *ethical* rather than *metaphysical* emphasis. This ethical emphasis is revealed in his Pledge of Love, and involves sacrificial love for neighbor. In stressing love for neighbor, Hubmaier's conception of remembrance in the Lord's Supper comes to the forefront as one of *participatory action* rather than passive observation. I argue that this view of remembrance finds parallels with the ancient Hebrew conception of memory, whereby action is connected with thought. Remembering in the ancient Hebrew mind involves covenant, and thus requires a proper response – or it becomes forgetting. Similarly, to Hubmaier, remembrance in the Supper is not mere fact recollection about the events of Christ's sacrifice; it involves the church sacrificially loving neighbor, as Christ sacrificially loved the church.

Lois Klassen, Carey Theological College, "Bearing the Cross" in the Theology of John Calvin"

Abstract: In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, John Calvin wrote extensively on bearing the cross. For Calvin, cross-bearing is the consummate expression of self-

denial, and self-denial is the essence of Christian sanctification. He demonstrates that only through suffering can believers learn to know themselves and God, and become conformed to the example of Christ.

My paper interprets John Calvin's text from the standpoint of two Mennonite problems. Firstly, from my experience as a Mennonite Brethren living in the lower mainland of British Columbia - breathing the air of a particular strain of New Calvinism influencing my denomination - I am asking how Calvin's theology of cross-bearing might critique my church milieu. Secondly, from my experience as an Anabaptist Christian inclined to dismiss the magisterial reformers as irrelevant to my theological and ethical commitments, I am asking if Calvin's writings on bearing the cross have anything to contribute to this core Anabaptist emphasis. Thus I begin my work with a hermeneutic predominantly of suspicion. However, in exploring the text I find much to affirm, necessitating a rehabilitation of Calvin's theology of cross-bearing for both groups of Mennonites: the New Calvinists and the peacemaking Anabaptists. This paper argues that John Calvin presents a well-developed doctrine of bearing the cross, which integrates theological and ethical concerns. Calvin's cross-bearing teaching has significant commonalities with both Martin Luther and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, reflecting their shared matrix of late medieval Catholic piety. The profound thematic connections among the *Theologia Germanica*, the *Devotia Moderna* movement, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists make cross-bearing less an 'Anabaptist distinctive,' and more a broadly-based re-interpretation and renewal of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels.

Breanna Nickel, University of Notre Dame, "Balthasar Hubmaier's "Scholastic" Experience: Reconstructing his Freiburg Years"

Abstract: It is well known that Balthasar Hubmaier was the only first-generation Anabaptist leader to earn a doctorate in theology. However, the influence of his early education upon his later works is rarely considered, due in part to the lack of available information concerning the specific texts and resources to which he had access.

With the hope of furthering our understanding of Hubmaier, this paper provides a reconstruction of his education at the University of Freiburg between 1503 and 1512. It gives attention to his program of study, his daily life, and especially to the primary medieval scholastic authorities he would have read. The chapter thereby expands upon Torsten Bergsten's famed biography of Hubmaier through a close examination of university documents including matriculation and burse records, statutes, the protocol books of the academic senate, and the protocols of the arts and theology faculties as well, among other records and secondary German works. All of the research for this paper was recently completed in the Freiburg Universitätsbibliothek, Universitätsarchiv, and Stadtarchiv.

The conclusion of this reconstruction is that Hubmaier's education was both thorough and far more varied than has previously been assumed. He would have gained at least some knowledge of a variety of medieval authorities including Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William Ockham, Gabriel Biel, and his teacher, Johann Eck. Thus we might further suggest that the influence of these authorities upon Hubmaier's thought deserves much more attention, for it appears that when he references them he does so not merely out of a reformer's desire to denounce past errors, but with personal knowledge and even a little appreciation of the continuing relevance of their thought.

Friday, June 15th

Joint session from 10:00–11:30

Sarah Johnson, University of Notre Dame, "Shaping the Sung Theology of the Future Mennonite Church"

Abstract: Sung theology—including, text, music, and performance—is lived theology. For many Mennonites, singing forms a vision of God, singing forms Christian community, and singing forms a life of faith in the

world (Kropf and Nafziger 2001). Since 1992, *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and its supplements (2005, 2007) have been the principle source of song for Mennonite congregations in North America.

The Mennonite Worship and Song Committee is in the process of developing a new hymnal, scheduled for publication in 2020, that is intended to serve the Anabaptist community in Canada and the United States in the decades ahead. This presentation would provide an overview of the worship and song collection process, with a focus on qualitative data gathered during the listening phase of the project, and theological guiding documents developed by the committee, including *Aspirations for Language Use*.

Most of the presentation time would be directed toward group discussion: What theology and practice should anchor the new hymnal? What new directions should the collection explore? What it is time to leave behind? Who do North American Mennonites hope to sing with, especially across difference? What do we need to express in our song? What do we need to hear from our song? Who are we called to become as individuals and communities through our song? Key themes may include colonialism, gender, Anabaptist identity, secularism, and globalization, among others.

This presentation and discussion would be an opportunity for the emerging Mennonite theologians participating in the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre conference to contribute directly to the sung and lived theology of the future church.

Concurrent sessions from 13:30–15:30

Concurrent A:

Tyler Campbell, University of Dayton, “Sunshine Inc. and Little Flower Catholic Parish: Ecumenism in the Contemporary Group Home”

Abstract: The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities has been undergoing a multiple year plan to decrease the amount of large scale care facilities in the state in favor of smaller, more communal group homes. The downsizing effort is the result of years of planning and advocating efforts that argue that all human beings deserve to live in an average home within a caring community, as opposed to larger, more “institutional” settings. The benefits of this transition seem obvious. However, the residents of large care facilities primarily live there due to their need for on-site medical observation, behavioral concerns, or other needs that cannot be easily met in community housing. Thus, the answer for the most proper version of residential services is not as black and white as those on both sides of the argument suggest.

This paper seeks to explain the difficult to navigate moral concerns of this housing conversation, particularly by addressing the difficulty in describing power dynamics between the carestaff and residents of these homes and services. It is my belief that the Anabaptist tradition can provide insight to the power dynamics of these interpersonal relationships that could be beneficial to the ongoing conversation. The paper will close by providing an example of a recent experimental group home built and staffed by the Mennonite organization, Sunshine Inc. of Northwest Ohio. This experimental home was built on land donated by a local Catholic parish, and was intentionally designed to the specifications of each of its residents. The experimental home provides tangible example of how the home itself can work to navigate the interpersonal ecumenical work between Mennonites and Catholics.

Jason Reimer Greig, VU Amsterdam/TMTC, “Honouring the Time of the Body: Towards a Renewed Ecclesial Practice of Footwashing in a High-Speed Age”

Abstract: The Christian rite of footwashing has been performed since the early church, with Anabaptist/Mennonite practice profoundly inspiring and enhancing the tradition. However, the contemporary decline in frequency of Mennonite-related communions practicing footwashing risks further marginalizing the sacrament/ordinance.

This waning of an essential Christian practice occurs alongside what some critical theorists like Harmut Rosa call “social acceleration,” the late modern speeding-up of life through the hegemony of consumer capitalism and the ubiquity of digital culture. A consequence of social acceleration is an eclipse of the body, understood either as mere accessory to a disembodied self or transcended entirely through virtuality. For those persons who live primarily through their bodies and cannot escape their creatureliness – like those considered disabled – high-speed society can easily project upon them the designation of “wasted lives.”

A renewed and re-discovered practice of footwashing could act as a way of forming Christians in the centrality and sacredness of the human body. Through slowing down enough to wash each other’s feet, Christians might learn how to “befriend time” rather than race “against the clock.” The communities of L’Arche offer a living example of the way footwashing trains persons in the virtue of tenderness, which understands time as God’s gift given for relationship, conversion, and peace. L’Arche founder Jean Vanier’s interpretation of footwashing as a sacrament of friendship offers another interpretation of the rite highly prescient to a high-speed and alienated age.

Daniel Rempel, Canadian Mennonite University, “Karl Barth's Theology as a Framework for Disability Theology”

Abstract: Throughout its existence, the church has done a poor job including persons with disability. Persons with disability have been ignored, shunned, or actively barred from participating fully within the life of the church. In response to this, the burgeoning field of disability theology has emerged, attempting to critique the ecclesial status quo. The field of disability theology is relatively new, emerging only within the last fifty years or so. As a result, it is still working on establishing its theological footing, with disability theologians employing a vast array of methodologies in order to work for the inclusion of persons with disability in both society and the church.

In my paper, I wish to join the conversation already present within disability theology, adding my voice to the work already present within the field. To do this, I engage the work of Karl Barth, examining particularly his theological anthropology and his doctrine of election. Barth's Christocentric theology renders an understanding of humanity that finds its fullness in Jesus Christ. Humanity is able to obtain this fullness because of Jesus' eternal act of election, a gift which is given by God to all people. The Christian response to this gift is to live as witnesses to the reality that we are elected by God. With Barth's theological anthropology and doctrine of election as our framework, I will provide a preliminary framework which I believe adequately allows us to work towards greater inclusion of persons with disability, both within society and the church.

Concurrent B:

Sarah Bixler, Princeton Theological Seminary, “The Self Unveiled: The Dis-integration of Mennonite Women’s Head Coverings”

Abstract: This essay investigates the impact of the head covering, in the latter half of the twentieth century, on Anabaptist Mennonite women’s images of themselves in relation to God and the faith community. The head covering endured as a religious mandate for North American Mennonite women long after the disappearance of men’s distinctive attire. It stands as a religious symbol for women’s piety and the psychological, physical and spiritual abuse inflicted on women under patriarchy. In addition, the head covering can be theorized as an aspect of the female sense of self. Though its wearing has disintegrated within progressive Mennonite communities, integration of the reality of its past use remains an overlooked but important task, which this inquiry takes up. Kaethe Weingarten’s theory of common shock serves as a framework for understanding the traumatic effects of this symbol appropriated by a patriarchal system. This

essay engages the scholarly insights of Marlene Epp, Brenda Martin Hurst, Pamela Klassen and Esther Stenson in its striving to unveil Mennonite women's sense of self in light of, and beyond, the head covering.

Gerald Ens, McMaster University, "An Appeal for an Ethnographic Mennonite Theology: Church as the Texture of Theological Interpretation"

Abstract: In this paper I claim that there is a need for qualitative ethnographic data of the church in Mennonite theology. Mennonite theology frequently makes the claim that theology must be situated in the context of church. The argument is that such rootedness in the church keeps theology accountable and concrete. If theology loses its home in the church and works instead within abstract epistemological categories it ceases to speak in the terms of embodied life and thereby becomes separated from the saving work of Christ that theology seeks to articulate.

While, broadly speaking, I accept these claims, in this paper I argue that it is not clear what the concrete meaning of these appeals to do theology in and for the church is. Indeed, I suggest that as they currently stand such claims may not be very meaningful at all. For it remains unclear how the claim that theology must be rooted in the church impacts the actual work of theological interpretation. The point seems to be that theologians should be involved in a church community, but the impact this involvement may or may not have on any particular theologian's work is vague and undetermined. In this way, I hold that the appeal for an embodied theology that is rooted in the church itself too often tends to abstraction: "church" becomes another epistemological category. To redress this I suggest that theologians engage in qualitative ethnographic research with the communities from and to which they seek to speak. Ethnographic data would allow the rich insights and experiences of the people who make up the church to inform theology. The church is not a text for the theologian to interpret, but ethnography might allow for the church to be a concrete texture of theologians' work.

Russ Snyder-Penner, Conrad Grebel University College, Daemonic Reality in the Chaos Theologies of Catherine Keller and Karl Barth"

Abstract: In their remarkably close readings of the second verse of the Bible, Catherine Keller and Karl Barth discover a reality of chaos. In chaos as *tehom*, Keller seeks for "a creativity that does not confuse itself with control, for an order that does not effect homogeneity, for a depth that is not identifiable with subjectivity." Barth, more ominously, apprehends in Gen. 1:2, *das Nichtige*, a nothingness, a darkness and a rebellion. Each theologian excavates the primordial text to find a shadow of maternal divinity, and then proceeds to demythologize that shadow. Keller rejects anthropomorphizing essentialism to derive from *tehom* not divinity, but a marriage between deconstruction and process theology. Barth determines *das Nichtige* is a rejected and unreal reality by (astonishingly) construing the spirit hovering over the waters to be not substantial divinity, but the caricature of an impotent god. And yet below the current of this 'demythologization', the theologies of Keller and Barth sublimate an antithetical, 'remythologizing' impulse. Keller contemplates pluri-singular personality in divine and angelic reality. Barth asserts the presence of angels, and the actuality of demons as manifestations of chaos. He describes the cosmos conversing with itself. Chaos has a face! Cosmos speaks! Hesitantly, I consider that a mythological sensibility, predisposed to see in the cosmos not systems and laws of nature, but *personae*: divinities, demons, angels, and spirits, sidesteps the paradox implied by chaos in creation. Personality, a blend of predictability and unpredictability, structure and disorder, bears within itself attributes of chaos as well as order. Could it be that by granting reality to chaos Keller and Barth have admitted daemons to the cosmos?

Concurrent sessions from 16:00–17:20

Concurrent A:

Zac Klassen, McMaster University, “‘Do Not Touch Me’: Ritual Impurity in Origen of Alexandria’s Interpretation of the Ascension”

Abstract: Douglas Farrow’s *Ascension Theology* advances the claim that post-Irenaeus ascension theology moved into Gnostic territory. Where Irenaeus held to a theology of Christ’s ascension in the flesh, later theologians, principle among them Origen of Alexandria, began to spiritualize the ascension, depicting the culmination of redemption as a putting off of the body. Recent work by David Moffitt has problematized this reading of Origen, however, by looking at Origen’s *Homilies on Leviticus* and *Hebrews* in order to show that Origen does have a conception of the ascension of Christ in the flesh and that such an account is integral to his presentation of Christ as priest and mediator. According to Moffitt, Origen claims that when Christ ascended to heaven he presented his perfected resurrected body to the Father as the end-point of his high-priestly office. In my paper I build on and fill a gap in Moffitt’s otherwise helpful work by attending to Origen’s exegesis of John 20:17 where Jesus instructs Mary, saying: “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father.” For Origen, Jesus’ ascension in his flesh does not immediately bring his perfected resurrected body into heaven (as Moffitt claims) but also his blood-stained, wounded, and ritually impure resurrected body that must not be touched. I argue that by framing Christ’s victory as involving a bloody battle (his passion), and by describing the trophies of his victory to be precisely his resurrected, but still ritually impure body, Origen also had in mind Numbers 31:23 and that he thus understood Christ’s return to the Father from that battle as being like Israel’s men returning to the camp from battle, at which point they required cleansing from impurities.

Giacomo Sanfilippo, Trinity College, “Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy: An Anabaptist-Orthodox Conversation on Tradition and *Theosis*”

Abstract: In his “True Evangelical Faith: The Anabaptists and Christian Confession” (*Mennonite Life*, September 2005, 60.3), Ben Ollenburger summarizes the importance of “right doctrine” and its first-millennium credal formulations for such early Anabaptist thinkers as Menno Simons, Dirk Philips, and Pilgram Marpeck. Ollenburger then goes on to discuss the affinity shared by these three for the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*, or deification, as the ultimate purpose for which the eternal Son of God becomes man, dies on the cross, rises from the dead, and ascends into heaven to take His place—as *man*—in a position of *equality with God*: i.e., enthroned at the right hand of the Father.

Right doctrine as “symbolized” in the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed, the deification of man as the necessary corollary of the incarnation of God, and the inseparability of orthopraxy from orthodoxy—these stand at the very heart of the Orthodox Church’s understanding of *Tradition*.

In conversation with the Ollenburger article, my paper will introduce an Orthodox perspective on the themes of Tradition and doctrine in general and *theosis* in particular. I will conclude with some concrete examples of how *theosis* provides the lens for an entirely new reading of Holy Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments.

The main patristic voice that I will bring into the dialogue will be that of St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662). While St. Athanasius of Alexandria (292-373) famously stated—almost in passing—that “God became man so that man could become God,” the idea of *theosis* neither originated nor ended with him. Profoundly rooted in Scripture, it appears implicitly at least as early as St. Irenaeus of Lyon (130-202) and reaches a high level of development in Maximus. I believe that a Mennonite audience will be especially gratified by Maximus’ insistence on the practical, ethical ramifications of the fundamentally mystical experience of *theosis*.

Concurrent B:

Karsten Snitker, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, “Traci West’s Womanist Christian Ethics and the Violence of Christian ‘Whiteness’”

Abstract: In *Wounds of the Spirit*, Traci C. West advocates for moving the foundation of Christian ethics from the vision of white supremacist patriarchy to that of the experience of the most vulnerable in society—namely black women. Throughout her argument she identifies many of the barriers to this task as racist strategies intended to perpetuate white supremacy within communities and congregations. Yet, many white Christians remain surprised by the idea that racism still exists within the United States. When confronted by episodes of violence by police officers against black and brown bodies, many white Christians respond by blaming the alleged offender and arguing the importance of “law and order” in society. Additionally, because of the increased public activity of Neo-Nazism in the United States, many white Christians believe more fervently that they are not racist and therefore are not violent towards black and brown bodies. However, as this paper will argue, whiteness itself can be a source of violence on black and brown bodies.

I will utilize the work of scholars to present a working definition of whiteness and investigate the violence within three of its aspects including its invisibility, its influence on economic structures, and its coercive social coding. Additionally, two of West’s ethical lenses will guide the discussion: that Christian ethics must be built from the experience of the most vulnerable in society and that the particular experience of the most vulnerable must be linked to the universal aspect of Christian moral claims. In working within West’s framework three themes emerge as possible responses for Christian whites to respond to their whiteness: white vulnerability, the relinquishment of white control, and the opposition of the Holy Spirit to the violence of whiteness.

Luis Marcos Tapia, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, “Christian nonviolence Here and Now: William Stringfellow’s Rejection of an Ideological Pacifism”

Abstract: William Stringfellow has been criticized and categorized as a non-pacifist Christian because of his opposition to a doctrinaire or pietistic pacifism that he considers invalid to confront the fallen principalities and powers due to its ideological character. The purpose of this paper is to confirm Stringfellow’s nonviolence, as a way of resisting the power of death in one’s own contemporary society, and also explain his rejection of an ideological pacifism.

To make this argument, in the first section I offer a summary of Stringfellow’s position on nonviolence as a mean to resist the “principalities and powers” unleashed within contemporary society. I then, in the second section, present Stringfellow’s rejection of an ideological pacifism and revisit the criticisms of Walter Wink and Mark Thiessen Nation to Stringfellow’s view. Finally, I conclude by describing the importance of Stringfellow’s rejection of an ideological pacifism, placing him within the pacifist Christian tradition.

Saturday, June 16th

Concurrent sessions from 10:00–12:00

Concurrent A:

Benjamin Bixler, Drew University, “What is the Value of the Hebrew Bible?: Anabaptist Christocentrism and the Hebrew Bible”

Abstract: While the Anabaptist approach to biblical interpretation has many helpful attributes, the priority placed on the New Testament over the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is one attribute which must be re-examined. The ‘christocentric hermeneutic’ that has come to characterize the Anabaptist approach to scripture, while well intentioned, has relegated the Hebrew Bible to secondary status. In an effort to

understand the character of God as peaceful and non-violent, many Anabaptists have too readily interpreted the Hebrew Bible only through the lens of Jesus, and thus miss the richness of the text. This approach can be seen in recent works such as *The Bible as Story* by Bontrager, Hershberger, and Sharp, as well as *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* by Boyd. Too often, these approaches seem to present the Hebrew Bible as insufficient or as a problem text.

As a student of the Hebrew Bible, I am interested in reclaiming the value of the Hebrew Bible, even those sections that are often seen as incompatible with the peaceful teachings of Jesus. In this paper, I will begin with an examination of early Anabaptists' preference for the New Testament and explore the reasons for this preference. Next, I will explore the contemporary manifestations of this hermeneutical approach (primarily through the two books named above). Lastly, I will offer some hermeneutical suggestions that will allow for a greater appreciation of the Hebrew Bible, using Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *Politics of Interpretation* to argue for de-centering of the historical Jesus in Anabaptist hermeneutics.

Micah Funk, St. Michael's College, "Communal Response to Systemic Injustice: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant"

Abstract: This paper will analyze the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Matthew 18:21-35, at the level of the Historical Jesus. This parable has been interpreted since Origen to be about sin. It is often interpreted focusing on the Christian's response to sin with an eye on the enormous amount of forgiveness that God has bestowed upon us. However, the portions of the parable that seem to focus on sin and forgiveness are Matthean redactions. When these portions are removed, this parable is addressing the systemic economic injustice present in Galilee during the first century. The paper will first examine the parable using social-scientific criticism following the example of William Herzog and Ernst Van Eck. Both scholars identify similar social features present in the text, most prominently patron-client relationships. Next, the economic situation in Galilee is discussed, using the work of Douglas Oakman, Sean Freyne, and Mordechai Aviam in order to understand Matt 18:21-35 against its economic backdrop. Finally, this paper will engage in a rereading of the parable, focusing on literary features and the social and economic realities to highlight the context within which the parable found its original meaning. This approach may be similar to Herzog and Van Eck, however this paper concludes that the interpretive fulcrum of the parable is the response of the servants in verse 31. By shifting the interpretive focus to the action of the group of servants, it becomes clear that Jesus' teaching in this parable encouraged a communal response to the oppressive social and economic forces in first century Galilee.

Trent Voth, Emmanuel College, "Due the Right Thing: Correcting the Misinterpretation of Eve in 1 Timothy 2.11-15"

Abstract: More than any other passage in scripture, 1 Tim 2.11-15 occupies a prime position in debates over women in ministry and leadership positions in congregations. At the metaphorical and rhetorical core of 1 Tim 2.11-15, the reference to Adam, Eve, deception, and transgression (vv. 13-14) serve as the essential interpretive image for Paul's instructions regarding females in the Church, especially in leadership positions. While some Mennonite and Anabaptist conferences have discerned that neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer impedes women from Church leadership positions, others, such as the U.S. Mennonite Brethren continue to maintain a prohibitive position, using 1 Timothy 2.11-15 as a central "proof text."

Utilizing the historical insights of scholars like Sandra Glahn, Paul Trebilco, and Judith Zinsser, and Biblical studies of scholars such as Richard and Catherine Clark-Kroegeer, Sally Gallagher, and S. M. Baugh my project will not only critique the prohibitive/restrictive interpretation of 1 Tim 2.11-15 but also show that reference to Adam and Eve challenges male leadership and elevates female independence. In short, my project will argue that the metaphorical and rhetorical centrality of Adam's status as "first-formed", Adam's lack of deception, and the acknowledgement of Eve's deception serve to implicate Adam and excuse Eve.

Furthermore these features encourage similar quiet and independent learning opportunities for “Eve” (i.e. women) that were afforded first to Adam. The project will also reiterate the essential contextual and historical importance of the Cult of Artemis of the Ephesians to the proper interpretation of 1 Timothy. Through this critical study of 1 Timothy 2.11-15 and its advocacy vis-à-vis women in the Church and Christian leadership, this project corrects a long-held misinterpretation and misapplication that have deeply and negatively affected women in the Church, especially in the Anabaptist/Mennonite traditions.

Concurrent B:

Max Kennel, McMaster University, “Beyond the Crisis and Fatigue of Mennonite Identity”

Abstract: Mennonite identity is elusive. For some it is attached to the Mennonite name, for others it relies upon historical Anabaptist principles, for still others it means the intersection or conflation of both. NeoAnabaptism too is elusive, representing a movement of Anabaptist principles outside of what is called ‘Mennonite.’ Still others reject speaking of Anabaptist Mennonite identity in singular terms at all. In a recent article in the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* Paul Martens critiques what he calls the ‘distillation trajectory’ in contemporary Mennonite theology from Bender, through Yoder, to Weaver, condemning the anachronism and essentialism that both result from and permit the reduction of Anabaptist Mennonite theology and identity to a set of naked essentials (i.e. Stuart Murray’s *The Naked Anabaptist* or Palmer Becker’s *Anabaptist Essentials*).

This presentation intervenes philosophically and theologically in the development of Anabaptist Mennonite identity, seeking to challenge its self-understanding of its texts, experiences, and traditions by focusing on the crisis and fatigue cycle of identity. On one hand, Anabaptist Mennonite identity seems to be undergoing successive identity *crises* which continually fuel questions about what makes a Mennonite a Mennonite, or an Anabaptist an Anabaptist. On the other hand – concurrently and contemporarily – Anabaptist Mennonite identity has recently taken on a feeling of *fatigue* or even exhaustion with these crises. The enduring distillation trajectory in the works of Murray and Becker seek to solve the Anabaptist Mennonite identity crisis with a set of clean tenets, whereas the recent work of Benjamin Goossen in *Chosen Nation* and Jeremy Bergen in “The Ecumenical Vocation of Anabaptist Theology” write *for* the Anabaptist Mennonite Tradition while avoiding assertions that attribute a *distinct* identity to the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition. This presentation contests both of these trajectories by appealing to both Anabaptist Mennonite texts and philosophical inquiries into the nature of identity.

Joshua Nightengale, Canadian Mennonite University, “Trauma in the Presence of God”

Abstract: Our experiences of suffering often call into question God’s presence and make immediate the theologian’s task to uncover faithful ways to speak of God’s absence that are neither empty platitudes to struggling congregations nor hopeless concessions to the current age. The predicament of God’s apparent absence is not merely an abstract conundrum for many people, myself included. When my family and I were taken hostage, God’s silence was deafening and continues to echo through my dreams and my waking moments into today. The continually resurfacing nature of trauma is a continuous witness to the absence of God. The following project develops a theology that interacts with this space with/out God in the hopes that it does not collapse into triumphalism or nihilism. Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery* provides the foundational understanding for trauma studies and the trauma survivor’s altered physiological experience of time and space. In *Spirit and Trauma*, Shelly Rambo provides an exemplary methodology in the field as she develops a pneumatology of what remains by exploring the way texts in the Christian tradition can attest to the liminal experiences of trauma. The contours of Jürgen Moltmann’s theology and broader theories of time and the cosmos provide a theological arena for the discussion of trauma and its impact on how one talks about God’s presence, or lack thereof. Moltmann recognizes God’s presence and absence in the cosmos as it

suffers and hopes for redemption. Moltmann's theology is an important point of departure for this project because he is keenly aware of the affect trauma has on theologizing. This presentation will construct a theology that recognizes the differentiated and mediated spatio-temporal presence of God, bearing witness to experiences of trauma and experiences of God, and providing the grounds for a hope for recovery that gives strength to the community to endure with love.

Keynote respondent workshop from 13:30–15:00

Carol Penner, Conrad Grebel University College, "Conferences, Experiences, Interpretations"

Abstract: Scholars from different geographical and social locations have presented a wide variety of papers at this conference. They are a text we have perused. What is our experience of perusing? What insights and questions do we take away? In this final session we will participate in a hands-on exercise where we share our interpretations of this time together.