



Toronto Mennonite
Theological Centre
Conrad Grebel University College



Käthe Kollwitz, "The Mothers"

HOPE, DESPAIR, LAMENT

NINTH BIENNIAL GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

17-19 JUNE 2021 | ONLINE

For further details visit <https://uwaterloo.ca/toronto-mennonite-theological-centre/graduate-student-conference>

Hope, Despair, Lament: Ninth Biennial Graduate Student Conference

Schedule—please note all times are Eastern Daylight Time (UTC-5)

Thursday, 17 June 2021

- 14:30–15:00 **Virtual arrivals** (Wonder)
- 15:00–15:30 **Welcome & Introductions** (Zoom)
- 15:30–17:30 **Joint session** (Zoom)
Contexts of Crisis, Contexts of Hope
Gerald Ens, McMaster University, presiding
Taewook Bae, Canadian Mennonite University, “Nurturing Hospitality in the Midst of Fear: Focusing on the Yemeni Refugee Issue in South Korea”
Carl Friesen, University of Notre Dame, “Arbeit und Hoffe: Hope as Practical Virtue in the Midst of Ecological Crisis”
Sarah Ikiror, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, “Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Primary School—Church Intervention”
Nindy Sasongko, Fordham University, “Necropolitics and the Ghost of Lament: Moltmann, Ellacuría, and Political Pneumatology in the Aftermath of the Indonesian Forgotten Massacres, 1965-66”
- 18:00–19:00 **Virtual supper** (Wonder)

Friday, 18 June 2021

- 10:00–12:00 **Joint session** (Zoom)
Hope and the Perils of Nonviolence
Hyejung Jessie Yum, Emmanuel College, presiding
Max Kennel, McMaster University, “Violence, History, and Conspiracism”
Chris Sundby, Regent College, “Bonhoeffer Amongst the Anabaptists: A Survey of Seventy Years of *Nachfolge*”
Anne Olieba, Mount Kenya University, “Carrying Books and Babies”
- 13:00–15:00 **Concurrent sessions** (Zoom)
Suffering the Wounds of History
Morgan Bell, Emmanuel College, presiding
Ryrie Dirksen, Nipissing University, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Case Study of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in Molotschna, Ukraine, 1918–1920”
Nathan Hershberger, Duke University, “‘A Holy Realm Will Arise’: Münster, Scripture, and the Wounds of Hope”
Daniel Rempel, University of Aberdeen, “Valiant Martyrs, or Suffering Ancestors? Hope and Despair in the Accounts of Anabaptist Martyrdom in

Sixteenth Century Europe and Mennonite Suffering in Twentieth Century Russia”

Violence, Exegesis, Hope

Eliana Ah Rum Ku, Emmanuel College, presiding

Ben Bixler, Drew Theological School, “Revenge Fantasy and Cycles of Violence in the Exodus Story”

Jake Martin White, Conrad Grebel University College, “Besieged by the White God: Following Job Beyond the Religion of Whiteness into the Freedom of Belovedness”

J. Thomas Reimer, St. Michael’s College, “Spiration, Filioque, Tonglen: A Study of Breath in Early Christian Creation Theory”

15:00–16:00

Coffee break (Wonder)

16:00–18:00

Concurrent sessions (Zoom)

Lament and Healing

Nindy Sasongko, Fordham University, presiding

Jonathan Boerger, McMaster Divinity College, “Naming Narrating, and Negotiating Anger in Pastoral Care: Transforming a “Deadly Sin” into Whole-Hearted Lament and Life-Giving Love”

Andrew Dyck, Wycliffe College, “To Gather Forgotten Voices: Lost Female Interpretations of Biblical Lament Literature”

Eliana Ah Rum Ku, Emmanuel College, “Call on Lament Against Apathy and Amnesia”

Hope and the Cultivation of Peace

Daniel Rempel, University of Aberdeen, presiding

Morgan Bell, Emmanuel College, “Set Your Hope Fully on Grace”: Schleithem, Reformed Apocalypticism, and the Horizons of Hope”

Gerald Ens, McMaster University, “Extraordinarily Ordinary Incarnation: Hope and/as Affection in Simone Weil and Wendell Berry”

Pamela Obonde, Canadian Mennonite University, “Women as Agency: A Social Change Approach”

19:00–20:30

Keynote lecture (Zoom)

Benjamin Bixler, Drew Theological School, presiding

David Evans, Eastern Mennonite University, “American History Never Was American to Me”

Saturday, 19 June 2021

9:00–10:30

Joint session (Zoom)

Hymn Festival

Nathan Hershberger, Duke University, presiding

Sarah Johnson, University of Notre Dame, “Hope, Despair, Lament in Song and Prayer”

11:00–13:00

Joint session (Zoom)

Difficult Hope at the Crossroads

Max Kennel, McMaster University, presiding

Hajde Sadje, University of Hamburg, “Hope Against Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks in the times of COVID-19 Pandemic”

Eric Trinka, Catholic University of America, “What has Kuntillet ‘Ajrud to do with Jerusalem?: Hope Found at the Crossroads of Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology”

Noemi Vega Quiñones, Southern Methodist University, “An Embodied Critical Hope as a Virtue in Peacemaking”

Abstracts (grouped by session)

Thursday, 17 June 2021

Joint session from 15:30–17:30

Contexts of Crisis, Contexts of Hope

Taewook Bae, Canadian Mennonite University, “Nurturing Hospitality in the Midst of Fear: Focusing on the Yemeni Refugee Issue in South Korea”

Abstract: During the 2018 Yemeni refugee issue in Korea, it appeared that a culture of fear could emerge and result in a social exclusion producing systematic barriers affecting the human rights of refugees. However, people may choose an opposite direction. If a hosting community nurtures hospitality, defined as building relationships with others while desiring their well-being, their political system could have more space for coexistence between their citizens and refugees.

This research focuses on the question of how a culture of hospitality may be built. It aims to contribute strategies for heightening inclusivity and hospitality towards refugees and reducing actions based on fear. This study utilizes a qualitative approach with face-to-face semi-structured interviews as a basis to understand the experience of twenty-two interviewees’ hospitality efforts in a refugee support workplace in Korea.

Four factors emerged as significant regarding the interviewees’ motivations to take action enhancing hospitality. First, many interviewees raised their awareness through their observations of Korean negativity, their enlightenment from media and sermons, and their firsthand experiences. Second, interviewees were influenced by the hospitality practices of their own friends and acquaintances, and for some interviewees, their community members’ support became the interviewees’ steppingstones for hospitality. Third, forming friendships between Koreans and Yemenis sustained their motivations in practising hospitality. Fourth, for the Yemeni interviewees, their culture of hospitality was a major motivation.

I recommended seven strategies with potential to enhance a culture of hospitality. First, create opportunities for Face-to-Face Meetings. Second, share stories. Third, pursue reciprocity in building relationship with refugees. Fourth, create a peace journalism education. Fifth, set up education program to heighten empathy. Sixth, develop Christian teachings that recognize human dignity. Seventh, nurture communities that share a value of hospitality.

Carl Friesen, University of Notre Dame, “Arbeit und Hoffe: Hope as Practical Virtue in the Midst of Ecological Crisis”

Abstract: The unprecedented challenges wrought by the ecological crises of the early 21st century have produced two increasingly polarized responses: temerity from those who assume a technocratic solution is imminent and sufficient to remedy the rapacious destruction of our warming planet and despair from those who believe we have already passed the invisible boundary of sustainability. Both responses tend toward passivity and abstraction as the former response optimistically awaits future technological innovation and the latter pessimistically rejects the possibility of meaningful action. This essay attempts to outline a Christian account of hope that resists these dual temptations. I center my discussion on the theological significance of a traditional Anabaptist-Mennonite image, inscribed on the title page of *The Martyr’s Mirror*, of a peasant farmer working beneath the motto, “Arbeite und Hoffe.” I contend that this evocative image encapsulates well the internal tension of Christian hope as

a practical virtue that is at once eschatologically oriented and materially grounded in our present actions. Drawing further insights from the work of Wendell Berry, James Gustafson, and Kathryn Tanner, I proceed to develop this account of hope as the key to meaningful action in the face of formidable ecological crises. By grounding Christian hope in divine grace rather than human accomplishments, I suggest, we are freed to do good work in the present. Hope rests in what is given to us as gift in God's creating, sustaining, and redeeming work, providing a basis for hopeful participation in the life-giving patterns of God's good creation now, even while we anticipate a final consummation in the eschaton. Such hope is not merely an abstraction, however, but is instantiated through living examples of healthful forms of life. Ultimately, moral exemplars give us further grounds for hope as they reveal concrete possibilities for participation in God's abundant life.

Sarah Ikiror, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, "Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Primary School—Church Intervention"

Abstract: Water hygiene and sanitation (WASH) has received a lot of international attention in the recent years. Progress on the attainment of the global United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicates that Sub Saharan Africa is among the regions lagging behind towards the attainment of improved sanitation. Kenya is not exempt from this scenario. Given that sanitation is now considered a basic right, this paper seeks to explore how this goal is being met among school going children and the role being played by the Mennonite church in Kenya to help achieve this goal while showing love and compassion of Jesus Christ. School going children are vulnerable therefore structures and practices have to be put in place to ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene facilities are adequately provided for them especially in their schools. Proper WASH facilities contribute to a conducive learning environment. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of water, hygiene and sanitation on curriculum implementation among primary going students in Mathare North Mennonite Primary School, Nairobi, Kenya. The study seeks to find out the status of water, hygiene and sanitation in Mathare North Mennonite Primary School; to what extent do the water, hygiene and sanitation status meet the needs of adolescent girls; the extent to which water, hygiene and sanitation conditions in the primary school adhere to the national school health policy; how does water, sanitation and hygiene in the primary school affect teaching and learning; are parent content with the facilities and services offered at the school. The study will use the mixed methods design. The target population will consist of the headteachers, teachers and learners and parents. Data will be collected using questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussions.

Nindy Sasongko, Fordham University, "Necropolitics and the Ghost of Lament: Moltmann, Ellacuría, and Political Pneumatology in the Aftermath of the Indonesian Forgotten Massacres, 1965-66"

Abstract: What does the Holy Spirit convey in the context of epistemic ignorance? This paper seeks to revisit the understanding of the Holy Spirit as the lamenting ghost by linking pneumatology to the socio-political reality in post-Indonesian killings and the role of the Catholic Church. In 1965-1966, one of the cruelest yet forgotten massacres in the twentieth century, which claimed more than five hundred thousand lives of the alleged communists, took place throughout the Indonesian archipelago (Robinson 2018). Although Catholic and Protestant Churches enjoyed the privilege of the "great revival" after the massacres, Indonesian churches, I argue, were complicit in the killings. Indonesian Christians who opposed the Indonesian Communist Party chose to support the army's anti-communist purge. Church leaders not only failed to protect parishioners from arrest and killing but also used their

religious authority aggressively to praise the army's campaign against the PKI and encourage the people to take part in it (Robinson 2018, 174). Indeed, Indonesian churches took part in perpetuating the epistemic ignorance.

Drawing upon Achille Mbembe's "necropolitics" and Avery Gordon's spectral theory, this paper argues that the Holy Spirit can be understood as the Spirit sent by the Messiah in after his death within the necropolitical context and the haunting presence of the victimized Son. Firstly, I shall sketch how the Christian churches, in supporting the anti-communist purge, was complicit in the killings by acting as the sovereign who can "define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (Mbembe 2003, 27). Secondly, I shall revisit the theology of the Holy Spirit by discussing the thought of Jürgen Moltmann and Ignacio Ellacuría by focusing on the relationships between the Spirit, the church, and the marginalized people. Thirdly, to elucidate political pneumatology in the aftermath of Indonesian mass killings, I shall draw that the effaced people of experienced what Mbembe calls "slave life" of the victimized Son who lost property, body, and political right. The Spirit of the massacred Son is a form of "death-in-life," calling the living people to listen to its groanings (Rom. 8:26-27), to discern, and to act thereof. As such, the Spirit can be understood as the specter of the dead that bridges the past and the present with memories that have been repressed or ignored by society.

Friday, 18 June 2021

Joint session from 10:00–12:00

Hope and the Perils of Nonviolence

Max Kennel, McMaster University, "Violence, History, and Conspiracism"

Abstract: Conspiratorial thinking has recently become a prominent matter of public and popular concern, taking root in different but important ways during the COVID-19 pandemic and the violent end of the Trump presidency. Groups like QAnon and their connection to violent events such as the 'storming of the capital' have brought conspiratorial thinking to the forefront of public discourse. However, theologians and scholars of religion will recognize conspiratorial thinking as a constituent part of long-standing prejudices, from antisemitism and racism to scapegoating and social conflict. Conspiracism presents itself as a form of 'stigmatized knowledge,' and shares many similarities with religiosity – especially the desires for an ordered and meaningful world, and a providential economy. But the desire for order that characterizes conspiracism is accompanied by problematic epistemological inflexibilities. This presentation examines major continuities and discontinuities between conspiracism and religion, and questions the relationship between conspiracism and violence, while suggesting that the patterns of thinking and uses of the past that structure conspiratorial thinking can lend themselves to violences ranging from physical and political violations to structural violence and social prejudice.

Drawing from foundational and recent works on conspiracism by Michael Barkun and Michael Butter, and resourcing critiques of violence from humanist Mennonites like Robert Friedmann and ex-Mennonites such as Grace Jantzen, this presentation will show how – although they address serious existential questions in persuasive ways – the underlying normative orders and justification narratives that structure conspiratorial thinking are profoundly vulnerable to charges of violence.

Chris Sundby, Regent College, “Bonhoeffer Amongst the Anabaptists: A Survey of Seventy Years of *Nachfolge*”

Abstract: A 1949 reviewer of *The Cost of Discipleship* noted that Dietrich “Bonhoeffer, though dead, yet speaketh” – and continues to do so through his impact on Anabaptists’ understanding of ‘discipleship.’ Bonhoeffer, a mid-twentieth century theologian well-acquainted with hope, despair, and lament, had a large impact on Mennonite self-understanding after his execution in 1945. Bonhoeffer’s *Nachfolge* (1937) also may have influenced Harold S. Bender’s understanding of ‘discipleship,’ and the term’s inclusion in his 1942 address, *The Anabaptist Vision*. The subsequent impact of the *Vision* is undeniable, and has since been recovered (1957), recast (1986), and most recently recovered *from* (2020).

This research essay explores Bender’s initial relationship to *Nachfolge* and surveys the engagement of Peace Church interpreters with Bonhoeffer up to contemporary debates. These debates largely surround Stanley Hauerwas’ writings on Bonhoeffer, often criticized as too ‘Yoderian.’ Mark Thiessen Nation’s publication of *Bonhoeffer the Assassin?* (2013) also caused quite a stir, with other scholars pushing back and emphasizing Bonhoeffer’s Lutheranism and ‘Peace Ethic’ over his ‘Pacifism.’ What is missing from these debates is a longer view of Anabaptist engagements with Bonhoeffer.

The essay begins with Bender and Bonhoeffer sharing a dogmatics class in Tübingen in 1923 and follows later interpreters of *Discipleship* and *Ethics* (1949): Bender taught *from Discipleship* at Goshen in 1950-51 (and once remarked that “Bonhoeffer would actually make a pretty good Anabaptist himself”), J. Lawrence Burkholder referenced Bonhoeffer extensively, Peter Brown was a formative member in the early years of the International Bonhoeffer Society (IBS), A.J. Klassen proposed a symposium on Anabaptist interpretation in 1970, Yoder lectured on him in 1988 at the IBS, multiple dissertations, etc. The essay concludes with critical remarks drawing on Petra Brown’s *Bonhoeffer: God’s Conspirator in a State of Exception* (2019).

Bonhoeffer’s *Nachfolge*, written during a time of political polarization and totalitarianism, and *Ethics* written during the despair of prison, still speak to Peace Churches today and continue to provide wisdom for the present and the future.

Anne Olieba, Mount Kenya University, “Carrying Books and Babies”

Abstract: The statistics surrounding teenage pregnancy in Kenya reveal a dire societal problem. Primary school-going children aged 9 to 16 years often fall victim to malicious predators who are out to rob them of their futures. Consequently, the drop out rates within this demography have risen resulting to unorthodox solutions to address their immediate problems.

Unfortunately, suicide or opting for unsafe abortion practices as solutions indicate a curriculum that is failing. The importance of teaching life skills is overlooked, hence, these girls develop having esteem issues and poor decision making skills. Therefore, addressing this mandates that these girls are supported through counselling, sex education, school reintegration, and ways to support their babies while schooling.

Since prevention is better than cure, empowerment is the initial step to eradicating this problem. Policy makers ought to integrate sex education into the curriculum whereas educators approach this topic competently. Sex education should not be viewed as a taboo topic since this narrative creates a gap for sexual promiscuity to adhere.

Furthermore, offering psychosocial support to meet the demanding needs of teenage motherhood is vital. Kenya has a return-to-school policy for girls after weaning their babies. However, this is weakly implemented as many teachers are unaware of the policy. Additionally, the financial support to train

teachers on how to reintegrate the young mothers is limited. Unfortunately, the financial and moral support from parents, coupled with societal shame, also prevent the girls from returning to school. Nevertheless, educators and social workers can promote counselling support by visiting schools and the community to educate both the girls and their parents. Finally, safe houses should be provided to those kicked from their homes while encouraging those who don't wish to resume school to enrol in technical colleges which teach skills that endorse their economic empowerment.

Concurrent sessions from 13:00–15:00

Suffering the Wounds of History

Ryrie Dirksen, Nipissing University, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Case Study of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in Molotschna, Ukraine, 1918–1920”

Abstract: In 1918, as World War I (WWI) was coming to an end in Russia, Mennonites who had historically immigrated to southern Russia (modern day Ukraine) from Germany, debated if they should take-up arms. The situation was fraught and complicated. Mennonites are theological pacifists. Pacifism is the belief that disputes should be settled peacefully as opposed to through armed conflict. Non-resistance is a form of pacifism that opposes physical resistance against authority despite unjust circumstances. To make matters worse, the Red Army and Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno threatened Mennonite existence. In response to these threats, Mennonite men living in southwest Ukraine decided to save themselves and their people by arming the community. This caused a theological crisis. These armed units were called *Selbstschutz* or self-defence units. *Selbstschutz* were armed militia who acted in self-defence of Mennonite life and values. My research seeks to explain how Mennonite men in Ukraine responded to the threat of violence in 1918 and how it had an impact on their communities. I answer this question using diaries, written experiences of *Selbstschutz* members, and interviews conducted with *Selbstschutz* members found at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario. The conflict between pacifism and *Selbstschutz* units can be used as a case study to provide insight into the relationship between ideology and action. There are several ideologies in the world today that are rooted in religion, but are executed by violence. The Mennonite *Selbstschutz* is an example of how the relationship between religion, violence, and pacifism is related to socio-political motives and impacts and has relevance today.

Nathan Hershberger, Duke University, “‘A Holy Realm Will Arise’: Münster, Scripture, and the Wounds of Hope”

Abstract: What happens to your wounds when you read the Bible? How do the difficulties in the text grate against the pain of the past and the hope of the future? What does it look like when your reading re-wounds? And what might it feel like for the wounds of both text and reader to be healed? In this paper I provide a close reading of two 16th century Anabaptist texts in pursuit of these questions. First I examine *Of Earthly and Temporal Power* written in 1535 by the Münsterite Anabaptist theologian Bernhard Rothmann. Next I turn to *Concerning Spiritual Restitution*, written in 1559 by the Dutch Anabaptist leader Dirk Philips.

I seek to show how each text responds to the wounds surrounding the events at Münster, but with a radically different hermeneutic. For Rothmann, the injustice of the present moment and the hope of a radically transformed future infuse into his reading a literal-prophetic dispensational scheme. He reads scripture as finding its telos in the events of the present, an approach which then reinforces the scriptural justification he provides for the disastrous events at Münster. For Philips, writing two decades later, the wound is not only the persecution of Anabaptists—to which Rothmann also

responds—but the very calamities which ended Rothmann’s life at Münster. In contrast to Rothmann, Philips responds with a Christocentric figural hermeneutic which locates the believing community within the scriptural narrative—rather than the other way around. Philips’ hermeneutic ultimately grounds political hope more securely than Rothmann’s. It also provides a means for the wounds of the community to find healing in the figures of the text. Yet in contrasting ways both writers demonstrate how readings of scripture re-wound as often as they heal.

Daniel Rempel, University of Aberdeen, “Valiant Martyrs, or Suffering Ancestors? Hope and Despair in the Accounts of Anabaptist Martyrdom in Sixteenth Century Europe and Mennonite Suffering in Twentieth Century Russia”

Abstract: In this paper, I seek to discover how reading the stories of Anabaptist martyrs in the sixteenth century alongside the stories of Russian Mennonite suffering and persecution change the way that Mennonites tell our story. To do so, I will look at the way these two traditions have been received by later generations of Mennonites, how these stories have traditionally been told. I will evaluate how reading these pertinent narratives of our Mennonite tradition together helps us to understand our own past, and how that allows us to tell our story better. In examining these stories alongside each other, not only will we encounter both stories of hope and despair, but we also will be provoked to examine how these stories may affect Mennonite identity and practice today.

Violence, Exegesis, Hope

Ben Bixler, Drew University, “Revenge Fantasy and Cycles of Violence in the Exodus Story”

Abstract: This paper will read the exodus in line with Delores Williams, as a “holistic story, rather than event,” and explore the book of Exodus as a revenge fantasy. By connecting the narrative signposts of death in the water, that of the Hebrew boys in chapter 1 and the Egyptian army in chapter 15, I will explore how the initial violence committed against the Hebrew people in Egypt has become a suppressed traumatizing event that has shaped their collective identity. This suppressed trauma and despair becomes a motivation for the violence that then permeates the ensuing narrative, from the exodus from Egypt through the conquest of the promised land, and even beyond. This reading recognizes that the exodus as a ‘narrative of remembrance’ creates the potential for violence in those who adopt the story for their own communities.

I then turn to non-violent narrative responses to the trauma and despair of Exodus, raising ethical questions about the exodus story and about the value of fantasy as a form of release from trauma and despair, wrestling with songs of joy that celebrate death. I lastly link utopian studies, with its framework for imagining a hopeful future, and postcolonial studies, with its analysis of power dynamics, to consider liberation from structures of oppression that do not repeat cycles of violence. This opens the possibility for confronting the initial trauma and the creation of a collective identity that leads to a place of healing.

Jake Martin White, Conrad Grebel University College, “Besieged by the White God: Following Job Beyond the Religion of Whiteness into the Freedom of Belovedness”

Abstract: The presence of bodies besieged by violence forces us to inquire about how we speak of God, and simultaneously how readily we give attention to unsettling cries of protest in our theological speech. Can we speak about God and besieged bodies in the same breath? Such a task is particularly prescient in this moment, when strands of Christianity serve as a “sacred canopy” (to invoke Peter Berger), providing cover to white nationalist politics and profound acts of violence against non-white

persons. What theological response is necessitated, particularly as white theologians and churches grapple with this historical moment?

The lament of Job 19 is shockingly risky, deconstructive, and “uncivil” by any measure. In this speech, Job is besieged by militarized violence. This violence is wrought not by Job’s enemies, nor by “the accuser” of Job’s prologue, but by God’s own self. Job sees God not as helper but as tyrant, not as liberator but as divine war criminal. Meanwhile, Job’s friends remain concerned with defending God’s respectability – their God is beyond questioning, beyond accountability, beyond reproach. Job refuses to cede rhetorical ground to the friends’ traditional, learned, and dominant theological understandings. He presses towards freedom beyond this “white” God of respectability and power, towards a freedom which begins in a community of shared lament.

This exegetical paper will focus on Job 19, in conversation with James H. Cone's *Cross and Lynching Tree* (2011) and James W. Perkinson's *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (2004). In particular, I will explore what happens when readers give hospitable ears to Job’s risky and “uncivil” protest; how Job’s lament holds power to pierce the sacred canopy of white supremacy; and finally, how lament demands not only inquiring of, not only arguing with, but in fact dethroning the God of Whiteness, so God-talk can clear way for communities of shared lament and belovedness.

J. Thomas Reimer, St. Michael’s College, “Spiration, Filioque, Tonglen: A Study of Breath in Early Christian Creation Theory”

Abstract: I wish to propose a paper which explores the role of the Holy Spirit in early Christian creation accounts, and how the ‘breath of God’ or spiration metaphor operates in the context of an *exitus-reditus* model of creation. The *exitus*, both intra- and extra-divine, was unproblematically associated with God’s ‘exhalation’, but the association of *reditus* and ‘inhalation’ is less obvious, despite, as I will argue, clarifying some Trinitarian issues, and providing an illuminating contrast between the Father’s assertion that ‘it was good’, and the Son’s lament that creation has been forsaken.

Concurrent sessions from 16:00–18:00

Lament and Healing

Jonathan Boerger, McMaster Divinity College, “Naming Narrating, and Negotiating Anger in Pastoral Care: Transforming a “Deadly Sin” into Whole-Hearted Lament and Life-Giving Love”

Abstract: Anger has been recognized as a powerful emotion for thousands of years. Its destructive potential even earned it a place among the ancient church’s “Seven Deadly Sins.” Yet anger is a pervasive emotion that all humans experience. Perhaps then it is not anger itself that is a “deadly sin.” Perhaps anger is a powerful emotion that can be channelled as a force for good. Since anger often both stems from and is tangled in the roots of many real problems, responding appropriately to anger is sure to involve more than merely erasing the emotion. But embracing anger in church communities and providing pastoral care to an angry person can be as complicated as it is necessary. Therefore, this paper aims to reframe anger with theological, neurological, and psychological insights, and explore some of the possible pastoral implications. In learning to recognize and respond to anger appropriately, pastors and church communities may be equipped to provide more appropriate, loving care for one another, including the act of embracing anger in the process of grief as an aspect of whole-hearted lament.

Andrew Dyck, Wycliffe College, “To Gather Forgotten Voices: Lost Female Interpretations of Biblical Lament Literature”

Abstract: At the turn of the millennia, scholars have taken seriously the task of gathering lost and/or forgotten female interpretations of biblical texts. For instance, Marion A. Taylor, Agnes Choi, Heather E. Weir, Christiana de Groot, and Amanda W. Benckhuysen have published often in encyclopedic form several volumes that gather these lost voices. While the concentration of this important task has focused on historical female interpretations of Gen 1-3, I propose we pause and give ear to these lost female voices and their cries of lament *via* their reflections on biblical lament literature.

This paper primarily engages with the forgotten female interpretations of Pss 51; 88; and 130 from the fifteenth century forward. I give attention to the writings of Katharina Schütz Zell (1498-1562), Anne Vaughan Lock (1534-1602), Mary Sidney Herbert (1561-1621), Mary Anne Schimmel Penninck (1778-1856), and Mary E. Simpson (1821-1884). Prior to engaging with these writings, I discuss the sociological-political-economical-theological context that served to repress these voices.

Understanding these writers’ context will aid the reader in his/her understanding of the nature of these interpretations. Additionally, I discuss what it was that these women would have lamented. For instance, death in pregnancy was common, the loss of children due to illness was frequent, and they were, in a sense, subjects within a patriarchal society. I ask, how did these experiences impact their prayers of lament? Their devotional writings? And, their compositions of poetry and sonnets?

Furthermore, how did their social experiences impact their conceptions of God as immanent? It is found that these writings although forgotten hold significance for the modern biblical interpreter. While in the twenty-first century a woman’s death in childbirth is less frequent and most children read adulthood, the laments of these forgotten interpreters deserve recognition and inclusion.

Eliana Ah Rum Ku, Emmanuel College, “Call on Lament Against Apathy and Amnesia”

Abstract: In this article, I discuss the role and necessity of lament in preaching based on Lamentations. I focus on pain in the Bible and the world and place hope amid pain. This article is built on a preacher’s struggles about how to preach the silence of God and the suffering in the world. In a world filled with pain, churches need the voice of mourning as well as the voice of hope. There is no resurrection without the cross of Jesus. Likewise, without lamenting, people cannot experience a real hope because genuine hope is to come through the time of mourning.

I first analyze the communal voice of Lamentations 5 since preaching is done in the setting of public worship. I analyze Lamentations 5:19-22 in particular, which bears particular fruit for theological exegesis. I examine how practicing lament works for those who suffer, and why it is meaningful to preach Lamentations. Second, I pay attention to the necessity of lament in a Korean context. Even though Korea has obstacles preventing the public lament, I argue the possibility of public lament. It offers not only mourning for sin, but also mourning for sorrow that has been repressed and unrecognized. To do this, I will draw the voice of “Comfort Women” as the unnamed grief. Third, I suggest three roles for the preacher to practice lament.

Finally, I conclude by asking why lament is important in church, especially in the setting of worship. The good news was built on the scars of the resurrected body of Jesus. Therefore, in sermons, it is necessary to hear lament and not to suppress it by hasty proclamations of hope, because the voice of pain continues until we go to the kingdom of God where there is no more death, mourning, crying, and pain (Rev 21: 4)

Hope and the Cultivation of Peace

Morgan Bell, Emmanuel College, “Set Your Hope Fully on Grace”: Schleithem, Reformed Apocalypticism, and the Horizons of Hope”

Abstract: In the wake of Moltmann’s 1964 *Theology of Hope* and its critically appreciative development in North America, ‘hope’ as a theological theme has commanded much attention. Hope, in much of this theology, is described as ‘resistive’: pushing back against, chipping away at, and subverting the material and immaterial forces of despair. Yet in seeking to underscore Christian hopeful *activity* rather than *passive* hopefulness, such characterizations render Christian hope dependent on creaturely success in resisting despair; in short, these descriptions limit the breadth and depth of hope, circumscribed as they are by creaturely finitude.

In my paper, I propose to analyze “The Schleithem Confession of Faith” (1527) from a Reformed perspective. Specifically, I would highlight specific theological features of the confession which encourage hopeful Christian activity, safeguard against a passive hope, and yet which anchor hope in a robust eschatology whereby God – and not the creature – is the final guarantor of Christian hope. I would subsequently identify the nascent apocalyptic turn in theology as a contemporary expression of this alternative model of Christian hope. Engaging apocalyptic theologians from the Anabaptist tradition (such as Travis Kroeker and Kyle Gingerich Hiebert) and from my own (Phillip Ziegler), I would further demonstrate how several elements of the apocalyptic worldview – the three-actor drama, its emphasis on the sovereign action of God, and its insistence upon the cosmic lordship of Christ – fund a vision of hope consonant with traditional theological distinctives of the Radical Reformation as I see them yet congenial to theologies of hope outside the Anabaptist tradition.

Gerald Ens, McMaster University, “Extraordinarily Ordinary Incarnation: Hope and/as Affection in Simone Weil and Wendell Berry”

Abstract: This paper will bring together Simone Weil, one of the most famous 20th century Christian mystics, with Wendell Berry, one of the most prominent 20th and 21st century Christian environmental activists. In doing so, I will give voice to a Christian vision of embodied mysticism that lives into a hope that transcends optimism.

I have two primary reasons for reading these two thinkers together in this way. The first is to provide a more expansive and nuanced account of each of these important thinkers, for on first reading their differences may be more apparent than their similarities. For example, Weil often presents a negative view of the body and is deeply suspicious of social existence while Berry celebrates the body and social institutions like farming communities and the family. But I will show that Weil’s ascetic mysticism presents us with a radically embodied account of being present in love to the goodness of creation and that Berry’s account of embodied affection is reliant upon and oriented towards that which exceeds and is invisible to the material. The point here is not to elide the differences between the two, but to imagine a friendship and kinship that might arise out of both their affinities and differences. Second, out of the tensional mix of this imagined friendship, I will advance a practice of living into the torrential movement and eternal present of God’s reconciling “love or sorrow” via a life of ordinary affection.

Pamela Obonde, Canadian Mennonite University, “Women as Agency: A Social Change Approach”

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to begin to lay out ideas of models and applications of both individual and group attitudinal change at the church level aimed at bringing hope and peace for the Kenya Mennonite Church. Envisioned social change on the leadership of the church(male) that has

tended to advance traditional Christian thinking as Biblical truths in view of women in church leadership.

As a woman leader in the Mennonite church in Kenya and as a graduate student in Peace and Collaborative Development, I see the role of hope, demonstrated through the inclusivity of women in church leadership. Women as agency in the peace process to bring in those on the margins, where culture has tended to define and affect the role of women in both participation and leadership. As women we are looking for opportunities to have our voices heard and therefore be more effective in the Mennonite religious traditions.

The women's charismatic qualities exemplified as leaders in home fellowships and children's ministries, is sometimes dismissed as women-based evangelism. The church has not yet learnt how to relate to women who, perceiving their ministry calling, have chosen to walk an unconventional path. The church might make sense of the uncertain future by opening spaces for dialogue and mutual accountability at individual and group levels. This will ignite a process of social change aimed at unlearning the deeper foundational beliefs that have created a state of despair and hopelessness. This will transform the heart of both women and men as a people of peace. Sometimes God calls us to do something right where we are. We shall, therefore,

Light a peace candle; Jesus the peace of the world,
Put in a little more effort for the candle of peace to keep going.

Saturday, 19 June 2021

Joint session from 9:00–10:30

Hymn Festival

Sarah Johnson, University of Notre Dame, "Hope, Despair, Lament in Song and Prayer"

Abstract: Our theologies of hope, despair, and lament are expressed and formed when communities gather for worship. This hymn festival explores the theme of the conference through songs and worship resources, and the stories that accompany them, found in the new Mennonite hymnal and worship book, *Voices Together*. Topics include the psalms, anger, sexual abuse, climate crisis, community tragedies, and more. There is a focus on sharing material from Anabaptist sources and considering how it can be used in corporate worship.

Joint session from 11:00–13:00

Difficult Hope at the Crossroads

Hajde Sadje, University of Hamburg, "Hope Against Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks in the times of COVID-19 Pandemic"

Abstract: This article aims to provide a critical reflection on the role of Christian theology, focusing its content and prophetic message, articulated through Walter Brueggemann's three prophetic tasks in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. This paper proposes that critical theological reflection and its contents should always be directed to prophetic action, which places itself on the cutting edge of what is just and what is unjust in local communities, nations, and the world in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, I critically employ Brueggemann's three prophetic tasks in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that background, the article is divided into four sections: The first section offers a general introduction. The second section discusses "*reality amid ideology*" as a first

prophetic task. This part shows how COVID-19 reveals the global dimension of inequality and failures of global capitalism, including challenges raised by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second section focuses on “*embracing grief amid denial*” as a second prophetic task. The third section discussed “*hope amid despair*” as a third prophetic task. Finally, using these three prophetic tasks, the last part provides critical reflections on Duterte’s authoritarian populism and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eric Trink, Catholic University of America, “What has Kuntillet ‘Ajrud to do with Jerusalem?: Hope Found at the Crossroads of Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology”

Abstract: When Tertullian asked “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?,” he intended to make a definitive statement regarding the relationship between Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian theology. For him, true wisdom grew out of faith-enabled and biblically-derived interpretations of experience. The fruit of philosophy was to Tertullian “...that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it...” Tertullian is not the first (or last) to raise such epistemic arguments regarding the roles of faith and Scripture as the principal means of knowing for Christians. Claims of the Bible’s priority as the interpretive lens for Christian reality have reverberated across the centuries until the present day. Yet both before and after Tertullian, we find those who argue that alternative ways of knowing need not stand in opposition to the formation of the body of Christ.

This paper proposes an answer to the question of how Christian biblical scholars working to map developments in ancient Israelite religion are to relate bodies of extra-biblical evidence to that of the biblical texts in the process of providing exegetical material useful for theological work. The now-famous 9th/8th century BCE desert caravansary at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, and the inscriptions regarding Yahweh found there will provide the case-study to explore Israelite internal religious pluralism in relation to the task of doing “biblical theology” for the Church today. The paper is pertinent to the present ecclesial moment as many Christians wonder in the face of scientific or historical findings that seem to “disprove” the Bible, what exactly it is they are supposed to do with this ancient resource of faith. The aim is to show that historical critical scholarship can be not only a source of robust theological reflection, but also of hope for people of the Book.

Noemi Vega Quiñones, Southern Methodist University, “An Embodied Critical Hope as a Virtue in Peacemaking”

Abstract: The invitation to hope and to pacifist forms of peacemaking may be interpreted by people experiencing despair, lament, and anger as a negation of their pain. Further, an impulse to hope without an embodiment of that theological virtue can fall into escapism (the challenge of sectarianism) or suppression (the psychological challenge). Almost immediately after the shooting of George Floyd, appeals to peace and suppression of embodied anger were made across the social public spaces, from pastors and state leaders. Yet, alongside these invitations to embody *peaceful* protests in lieu of looting and the destruction of property, African American public theologians expressed anger, exhaustion, and pain and reiterated that the peaceful protestors were not the looters. Thus, over the last year as the world has confronted racial injustice and a global pandemic that disproportionately affects the poor, pacifist Christians are confronted with the questions of hope, despair, and lament and the place of these in alleviating our public pain. The aim of this paper is to show the relevance, need, and communal healing present within a virtue of embodied critical hope. Far from a method of escape or a suppression of appropriate emotions at the face of injustice, an embodied critical hope holds both the anger of injustice and the eschatological vision of the beloved

community. Drawing from Womanist, *Mujerista*, and Mennonite conceptions of hope, this paper situates a theory of critical hope within the Habakkuk 2 eschatological vision. Implications for peacemaking will be parsed out and exemplified through the work of local community organizers in Dallas, TX, San Antonio, TX, and Fresno, CA within the last year.