

# ABSTRACTS

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## TRADITION IS THE NEW RADICAL – PARALLEL PAPER SESSIONS

### PAPER SESSION I – December 12th, 16.30-17.30

#### 1a

#### **Revisiting the Misogyny of Early Cistercians: Bernard or Clairvaux's Subordinate Bride and an Alternate Tradition**

John Arblaster, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

It is well known that one of the most significant contributions of medieval women to theology was in the field of mystical theology. This paper will inquire into the content and the historical reception of two leading early Cistercian figures (Bernard of Clairvaux and William of Saint-Thierry) and into the way in which 13<sup>th</sup>-century female mystical authors critically inherited their theologies, particularly with respect to their allegorical readings of the Song of Songs. In brief, according to Bernard's volitional model, the Bride always remains subordinate since she can never love equally to the Bridegroom. In William's pneumatological model, on the other hand, the Bride and Bridegroom become fully equal because they partake fully of the same love. This paper will revisit the primary sources to explore the ways in which medieval women articulated a radical and emancipatory position in critical dialogue with their sources. The paper will investigate the metaphor of the bride from the Song with reference to the last question asked by the call for papers: what are the radical applications of this metaphor and/or in what way do they perpetuate misogynistic gender patterns? What are the different queer theological techniques employed by the two Cistercians in question, and in which ways are they evaluated and reformulated by their later female inheritors? Finally, I will address how and why these insights may be relevant for our own understanding of these metaphors and historical developments today.

#### **Matter and Femininity: A Problem or a Resource? On Giordano Bruno's Metaphysics**

Jonna Bornemark, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Södertörn University, Sweden.

As Genevieve Lloyd and others have argued; is ontology always gendered, i.e. are its most basic categories, in one way or another, hidden or explicitly, connected to gender? One example is the concepts of matter and form, where matter traditionally is connected to the female and form to the male. This is the case, for example, in Aristotle where the mother provides the baby with matter and the father gives it form. In Giordano Bruno's work *De la Causa, Principio et Uno* (1583) (English translation *Cause, Principle and Unity*) this tradition takes a surprising turn. The whole dialogue is framed in a discussion with a pedant antagonist

who is called “the enemy of women.” The content of the dialogue is highly philosophical and discusses, among other things, the relationship between matter and form, and increasingly intertwines them. But, as matter is spoken of as more and more active it is also spoken of in more and more female categories: Without matter (i.e. the woman), the form (i.e. man), loses all its power to exist. Matter continually throws off individual forms that it plays with for a short while. All of a sudden we find Bruno in an explicitly heretical feminist position, somewhere between a kind of lesbian position, where man is superfluous (as she brings forth forms by herself), and a polyamorous position with constantly new lovers (when she is united with steadily new forms). This position shows the strong heretical capacity of Bruno. It shows his capacity to throw things upside down and at the same time work in continuity with tradition. We can ask ourselves if it is problematic that he continues to connect matter to the female, or if we can learn from him today.

## 1b

### **The Erotic Gaze: Saints and Sadomasochistic Pleasure, Bodily Borders and Liberation of Queer Desire and Christian Theology**

Susanne Wigorts Yngvesson, Associate Professor in Ethics, Lecturer in Systematic Theology and Human Rights, Stockholm School of Theology, Sweden.

Throughout Christian history, pleasure has been one of the human experiences that has been difficult to handle theologically and spiritually. Even so, there are texts and practices speaking about pleasure and desire as liberating forces in contrast to its contemporary norms and ideals. The disobedient body always seems to be queer in contrast to the disciplined order. But, the disciplined order also has a function of shaping a creative contrast of a forbidden room, which makes it possible to liberate the spirit and the power (Douglas; Althaus-Reid). Experiences of filth, bodily liquids, violence and domination/submission seem to be important parts of desire (Foucault; Wildung Harrison/Heyward) as a creative force, beyond the masculine or feminine shape of the flesh. An important perception in sadomasochism is the gaze, which will be of interest in this article. The gaze opens or closes for relations beyond the individual body to control the pain/pleasure. It is physical but invisible between humans, but also between God and humans, as Catherine of Siena expresses: “O blinder than the blind! For having spoiled the key of obedience, you do not think of mending it! ...you should make a girdle to yourself to bind your loins with it, for fear you lose it [the key].” In this paper, two main questions will be raised: 1) What does it mean for Christian theology to rethink the “Western” body (Loughlin) in relation to a queer understanding of the body as desire and obedience/disobedience? 2) In what way can experiences (imagined or physical) in Christian and secular frameworks of sadomasochism contribute to a deeper understanding of desire in a queer reformation of the Church as body?

## PAPER SESSION II – December 13th, 9.00-10.00

2 a

### **Complexity and Authority: Islamic and Christian Tradition Radically Reclaimed.**

Teresa Callewaert, PhD student in Theological Ethics, University of Uppsala, Sweden.

In this paper I juxtapose the turn to tradition in Christian and Islamic feminist and queer ethics done by such thinkers as Kecia Ali and James Alison and Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle. My aim is to bring out the interesting similarity in how questions of identity, authority and soundness of methodology lead theorists, in both traditions, to reevaluate tradition and its resources, most notably those bypassed by earlier reformers such as traditional liturgy, doctrinal statements, and classical jurisprudence. I discuss the sources of the turn in postmodern philosophy's realization of the impossibility of a view from nowhere, but also in political developments and postcolonial critique of orientalist tropes. The consequences of the turn are identified as the strengthening of identity, such that radical thought is situated firmly inside tradition, and such interpretations taking up the struggle for authority among common believers. But, the result is also a growing intellectual complexity that on the one hand is implied by the richness and treasures of tradition, but which might threaten the strategic power of the simpler approaches and perhaps risks resulting in intellectual elitism instead of activism. Thinking coherently inside tradition implies accepting limitations that can result in obstacles to full emancipation, but which can act as bulwarks against rampant conservatism leaning on simplistic understandings of authenticity and original sources. While tradition might be necessary for the development of thought to have meaning at all, there is no escape from one's responsibility of interpretation. While this predicament is common to radical thinkers of both traditions, the treatment of them in the same paper makes evident how the particular and singular in a tradition is revealed in the struggle with its resources. It also highlights how the history of power dynamics, both discursive and material, affects traditions differently.

### **The Female Peacemaker: Remapping Femininities in the Interspace between Traditions**

Sara Gehlin, PhD, Post doc researcher at the Church of Sweden Research Unit, Uppsala.

Recent developments in ecumenical theology have infused new energy and dynamism into the Christian debate on peace and war. The debate, which for a long time has been characterized by the polarization between advocates of the two Christian traditions of pacifism and just war, now undergoes a transformation. Just peace is the concept around which this renewed ecumenical debate unfolds. However, the image of the female peacemaker in this debate so far appears restricted. Whereas the just peace debate promotes and values peacemaking efforts at the grass roots level, it is yet precisely to this level that the discussion of female peacemaking largely remains limited. This evokes the question of how images of the feminine instead could bring a widening and deepening of perspectives in regards to the theological understanding of peace that unfolds in the ecumenical sphere of today. Hence, this paper aims at exploring how feminist theologians of different confessional backgrounds draw from their

Christian traditions in order to sketch out femininities in relation to issues of peace. In bringing these voices into dialogue, in the interspace between traditions, the paper seeks to contribute to the turning of a debate in which visionary perspectives on female peacemaking still remain in the background. Here the remapping of femininities, in drawing from different confessional traditions, may break new ground for the contemporary progress of a theological understanding of peace.

## 2 b

### **Unorthodox Sexuality: Repetition, Resistance and Tradition in Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac* vol. I and II**

Mikael Larsson, Associate Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, Department of Theology, Uppsala University, Sweden.

Danish director Lars von Trier incessantly revolves around a core set of theological themes, such as the nature of goodness, the meaning of sacrifice, and the relationship between power and freedom. In response to his earlier films, theologians have asked whether he is reproducing "Old Testament" views or presenting subversive parodies of these traditions. His latest and little commented film, *Nymphomaniac* vol. 1 and 2 (2013), tells the story of a woman's sexual life, but could also be seen as a meta-reflection on the significance of storytelling in secularized society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the function of specifically Christian traditions in the *Nymphomaniac*'s construction of femininity. A number of items merit investigation, most notably the mode of narrating through analogy/metaphor, the practice of confession, the notion of the bible as an artifact, but also concepts like sin, blasphemy, ascension, the "western" and the "eastern church" and the significance of the icon. How could the connection between religious tradition and heteronormativity be understood and what are the possibilities of resisting such structures of power? A key issue will be to see what alterations of femininity the film's main character Joe manages to achieve through her lifelong "revolt" and to what extent religious traditions continue to constitute a fictional world that allegedly has left religion behind. Judith Butler will be a main theoretical conversation partner, above all through the notion of resistance that she develops in *Antigone's claim*. Furthermore, Gilles Deleuze's concept of *montage* will be used to discuss the film's interplay between image, word and sound in its construction of gender. In this paper, I hope to push beyond the often stereotypical reception of von Trier's works as either emancipatory or reactionary and map out some nuances in his doubtlessly repetitive use of tradition.

## **Gender Bending and (Re)Creating Tradition in Biblical Ethnography**

Jennifer Nyström, PhD student in NT studies, Lund University.

In a time when theology is made more “from below” by nowadays living believers and where both hermeneutics and Biblical Studies witness a turn to real readers, this paper provides an auto-ethnographical (“radical empiricism”) reflection centered on issues of gender and sexuality. Building on my own incidents, doing Bible reading fieldwork among conservative/fundamentalist Christian groups in Israel and Palestine, I join the growing theological stream of women voicing their experiences of embodied and embedded reflexivity struggles in conducting research in male-dominated social settings. Recurring gender and power struggles for both researcher and informant are made visible through examples of how the latter use different (even sexual harassment) techniques and appeals to Scripture to maintain and settle a subordinating gender relationship along with references of the “extreme perverse and sinful modern Queer Theology.” Thus, through discussing how these alternative and still radical constructions of femininities and masculinities are made within today’s growing conservative Christianity, I hold that female researchers are much needed in this field of theology making, and thereby offer and evaluate different strategies employed to handle and answer these gender performances and representations by using one’s Self in an ethically and accepted way.

2 c

## **Mysticism between the Political and Erotic**

Laura Hellsten, PhD student, Åbo Akademi University, Finland.

Can the re-examination of Medieval Dance practices give a new choreography to the pattern of situating mysticism as either erotic or political? In Michel de Certeau’s *The Mystic Fable*, which is his unfinished study of sixteenth and seventeenth century mysticism, he proposes that reducing mysticism to subjective, inner experiences is an ideological project of modernity. Instead he carves a place for the mystic tradition in Christianity that is in the margins and in the ecstatic encounter with “the Other.” This position is rather a series of practices that actively, yet indirectly, challenge traditional centers of power and privilege. Sarah Coakley, on the other hand, in her Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectures entitled: “Knowing in the Dark: Sin, Race, and the Quest for Salvation,” questions the tradition following de Certeau since she perceives that the marginalization of mystical writers is linked to a kind of eroticizing that renders the voices of the mystics as “mere semiotics”, a delicious subversiveness, which we need not take seriously. She says: “if you buy that package, you have essentially consented to the idea that mysticism, never changes society!” Instead Coakley suggests we need to bring the texts of the mystics into the forefront of Systematic Theology. In this paper, I will bring both the medieval practices of dance and the writing on dance by Mechthild of Magdeburg, in *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, into the spotlight in order to see if we can find an alternative to the juxtaposition of mysticism between the erotic and the political.

## **Privatized Monasticism: Asceticism as Individualized Spirituality and Obliteration of the Self**

Lovisa Nyman, PhD Student, Lund University, Sweden.

Ulrika Svalfors, University Lecturer, Karlstad University, Sweden.

In different ways, theology has struggled to overcome the weaknesses and pitfalls brought about by its adaption to modernity. One strand of the recent development in academic theology, as well as in different forms of church life, has pointed not only to the resources in the theology of the early church and the church fathers, but to the necessity of reanimating and reinventing the spiritual practices of this time. Theologians like Catherine Pickstock, John Milbank and Graham Ward, as well as Sarah Coakley, share the conviction that modernity as such can add nothing to the inherent potential for liberating spirituality in Christianity. This kind of return to tradition entails constructions of everything from ontology to social practices. One such practice, which is gaining increasing impact, is asceticism. By theologians like Coakley, asceticism is promoted as part of a contemplative path towards incorporation into God and thereby to a dissolved sense of gender, i.e. as a feminist praxis. By journals like *Pilgrim* it is promoted as the way to spiritual matureness, regardless of gender. In both cases, it is a matter of popularizing a monastic practice, claiming its necessity for salvation. What are, from a feminist perspective, the consequences of such an asceticism for the ontology of the self and for the idea of spiritual practice? In this paper we claim that this theology, which is aiming at making a detour around the modern project, is actually construing the self and the ascetic practice on its very premises. By scrutinizing the roots of the alleged origins of this kind of asceticism, the paper also suggests another point of departure where the materiality of spirituality, in terms of, for instance, gender, is a matter of political action.

## PAPER SESSION III – December 13th, 11.00-12.00

3 a

### **Clerical Sisters and Feminine Priests – Gender Constructions among Catholic Missionaries in the Nordic Countries in the era of Ultramontanism**

Yvonne Maria Werner, Professor of History, Lund University, Sweden.

Up to the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, which led to a theological reorientation within the Catholic Church, Catholicism was not only a religion; it was also a worldview with clearly political aims. This was due to the breakthrough of the Ultramontane movement in the mid-nineteenth century, which contributed to a renewal of Counter-Reformation confessionality and led to an upswing for Catholic missionary work across the world. Catholicism thus evolved into a counter-culture with clearly anti-modern traits, characterized by a strict hierarchical order, a broad popular footing, and triumphalism. The religious were to the fore of this Catholic system, and monastic life was regarded as the most accomplished expression of Catholic piety. Prior to the reforms of Vatican II the superiority of monastic life was more accentuated than today. The Catholic missionary offensive that started in the mid-nineteenth century was also aimed at the Nordic countries where, protected by the liberal religious laws passed in this period, they could build up a network of parishes and missions with schools, hospitals, and other social institutions. Catholic orders and congregations played a significant role in this missionary work. Male religious often took over the responsibility for the parishes, whereas the female religious mainly dedicated themselves to education, health care, and other social work. Most of these religious institutes were female congregations and at the beginning of the 1930s there were more than 1.300 Catholic sisters working in Scandinavia. Of the male orders, the Jesuits were the most important. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jesuits had five residences in Denmark and Sweden, as well as a Jesuit college in Ordrup, outside Copenhagen. These religious had professed to live according to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience, which meant that they lived in a religious community and were subject to a specific rule, marked by religious virtues such as humility, obedience, piety and self-sacrifice. Women religious sometimes had a great influence on the mission work, and the ‘ultramontanisation’ of Catholic culture contributed to give the Catholic concept of manhood a weak and gentle touch that was contradictory to the prevailing secular masculinity ideals. The belonging to a religious order, the ‘estate of perfection’, in many ways transcended socially constructed gender differences, as well as the subordinate role of woman stressed by the classic theology of Creation. Were Catholic women religious at work as missionaries in Scandinavia around 1900 representing an alternative form of feminism? And, were the male missionaries sticking to feminine ideals? Catholicism was indeed a counter-culture in modern society and in Protestant Scandinavia with its strong anti-Catholic traditions in a double sense. Yet, in what way did this affect the gender ideals and constructions? In this paper, I will try to respond to these questions in analyzing the missionary work of members of religious orders in Scandinavia as reflected in their letters and reports. I will also reflect on the relationship between Nordic and foreign, Catholic and Protestant, and how these categorisations were freighted with manliness and womanliness respectively.

## **The Witch's Body as the Underside of Christian Tradition: An Exercise in Queer Redemption**

Kristien Justaert, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

In my paper, I will approach the question of which 'tradition' we wish to retrieve for a radical feminist theology today, from the perspective of what Marcella Althaus-Reid calls 'queer redemption'. A practice of queer redemption looks into different locations in the past and present, outside the limited scope of a theological sexual orthodoxy, in order to redeem (not retain) 'loving friendships' and 'rebellious spirits' (*The Queer God*). Althaus-Reid proposes to look at redemption from the angle of masturbation (de-territorializing sexuality from procreation), instead of heterosexual family life, in order to unveil alternative forms of love and life. In this vein, I will look at the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century witch-hunts that took place in Western Europe. According to Silvia Federici these witch-hunts, conducted as a collaboration between Church and state, were a 'war against women' aimed at placing women's bodies and sexualities at the service of labor power in the context of primitive accumulation. Using the historical-materialist analyses of Federici, Midelfort, Barstow, and others, as well as historical accounts of witch trials and Church documents on the heresy of witchcraft, I will investigate the sexual politics of the witch-hunts by looking at how this under studied phenomenon changed our view of the female body, sexuality, reproduction and labor, and how it eliminated certain female practices, such as midwifery, female friendships, and the role (peasant) women played in resisting the emerging capitalism. This queer redemption of the 'witches' can alter our contemporary understanding of redemption, as Althaus-Reid envisaged, expanding it into areas at the underside of the Christian tradition, and help feminist theory/theology rediscover its rebellious potential.

### **3 b**

#### **The Male Saviour**

Johanna Lundin, MA student, Lund University, Sweden.

In my paper I present the conclusions that I have made in my Master thesis. I intend to treat the change within the feminist Christological discourse in, what I claim is, two generations of feminist theology. In the 1980's Rosemary Radford Ruether posed the question: Can a male savior save women?" This Ruether treats as a soteriological problem as it is first and foremost a male humanity represented in the incarnation of the Son. Ruether states that Christ has been understood as a male human as well as the Son of a patriarchal God. Her solution to the problem, of the male savior, is the person of Jesus Christ as the *kenosis* of the patriarchy. The person of Jesus Christ then gives us an understanding of what is truly divine, which is not necessarily patriarchal. The question posed by Ruether is still today being actively discussed. The radical orthodox movement has gathered inspiration from the ideas of Judith Butler where gender is regarded as something constructed and subsequently reproduced. Theologians such as Graham Ward and Sarah Coakley treat Ruether's soteriological question through this



new way of understanding gender. Ward means that the body of Christ is transcorporeal and thusly not solely male, and Coakley describes sexuality and gender as a part of the human nature created in the image of God. Being a creature with gender then means being created with divine desire. Therefore there are two different generations of Feminist Theology where the category of gender is seen rather differently. Hence, I will discuss whether Ruether's solutions are still relevant today and whether or not Radical Orthodoxy is just a way of avoiding the problems identified by the former feminist theologians. I claim that both generation's perspectives can be fruitful when combined. From the radical orthodox way of understanding gender, we can draw the conclusion that the binary gender categories are not relevant for the salvation. However, patriarchal hierarchies and limiting gender roles can be understood as a consequence of the Fall. This solution does not avoid the existing problem of patriarchal hierarchies in churches, society and the world, but uses the understanding of gender as fluent instead of as binary.

### **Orthodox Theology from Malevich to Pussy Riot**

Petra Carlsson, Lecturer in Systematic Theology, Stockholm School of Theology, Sweden.

In 2012, a Russian Feminist Collective, the Pussy Riot, prayed what they named a "Punk Prayer" in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Later that same year, two of the women, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, were sentenced to imprisonment for hooliganism. The judge explicitly stated that the women had been "motivated by religious enmity and hatred" and that their performance had been "blasphemous and insulting to believers." According to their own explanations, however, the young women's concern was another. The Pussy Riot members themselves claimed that their liturgical and artistic performance was standing in the Christian Orthodox tradition, as well as in a Russian artistic tradition. By way of Michel Foucault's writings on art, this paper suggests a way to understand the common denominator between these two sources of inspiration. It endeavors to show how a certain account of the apophatic appears in Foucault, Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, the OBERIU and René Magritte alike; an account that relates closely to the Pussy Riot's notion of the tradition of critique through faith in the Christian Orthodox tradition. It is an account of the apophatic that does not aim to protect the eminent oneness of the transcendent God, but rather to throw light upon the cracks in human knowledge and thus lead to an embrace of the multiplicity of life. Hence, it is an approach that involves playful and nonsensical artistic, as well as spiritual, techniques aiming beyond the illusory singularity of reason, and even beyond the notions of meaning and meaningfulness as such.

### **Kenosis as Ideal – A Problem and a Resource**

Jenny Karlsson, PhD student, Åbo Akademi, Finland.

In the decades of the 1960's and -70's, feminist theologians claimed female experience for doing theology. According to some, the Christian way of understanding love as a self-giving ideal was problematic for women, because women gave too much of themselves. Therefore, women instead needed to learn how to realize the self. Fifty years later, society has gone through major changes. Economic welfare has contributed to the raised standard for many and is also one factor that has contributed to increased equality of opportunity between women and men. On the flip side, while women in parts of the world have fought successfully and reached prominent positions both in the private and public sphere, the gap between the rich and the poor is growing. The resources of the earth are exploited by a few at the cost of the wellbeing of many. Feminist theologian Sallie McFague approaches the issues of the world's economic and ecological crisis in *Blessed are the Consumers* (2013). She writes that the sin of the contemporary human being is the "voracious, lustful desire to have it all for oneself." In Christian theology and tradition, she finds resources to deal with the issues and her answer is *kenosis*. Even though the issues of economy and ecology seem to be the most urgent these issues seem to be at odds with a theology that empowers women? What does it mean that a feminist theologian, like McFague, is writing a theology seemingly similar to the theologies that were criticized by feminist theologians in the 1960's? In my paper I would like to explore the need for *kenosis* in Feminist Theology, but my focus is on the dangers of bringing in the ideal of *kenosis* without looking at it through the lens of Feminist Theology.

### **The Language of the Triune God**

Ninna Edgardh, Professor of Ecclesiology, Uppsala University, Sweden.

I would like to explore in my paper the intersection between the modern idea of inclusive liturgical language and the traditional understanding of the liturgy as deeply structured by the Trinity. Feminist arguments for inclusive language, from Sally McFague to Gail Ramshaw and onwards, has typically built on theories of ritual language as metaphorical. The arguments have leaned on a nominalistic tradition denying the existence of universals. During the last decades a complementary tradition has developed, with Mary McClintock Fulkerson, Rebecca Chopp and others, based on poststructuralist ideas of language as creating, rather than mirroring, reality. The issues around inclusive language has reemerged recently in Sweden in relation to a proposed new worship manual for the Church of Sweden. One of the most difficult issues to solve has been how to express the Christian faith in a Triune God in a more gender inclusive way than the traditional formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This paper aims at exploring the resources offered by the idea of worship structured by the Trinity, or feminist alternatives to this formula, rather than the Trinity being evoked by the specific formula of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,. Theoretically this exploration moves beyond the dichotomy between realism and nominalism towards a poststructuralist application of traditional Trinitarian language.

## PAPER SESSION IV – December 13th, 15.30-16.30

4 a

### **Breastfeeding from Christ**

Rev. Dr. Sally Douglas, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia.

Across the earliest evidence of the Jesus movement, within the prayer and hymn fragments embedded within various Second Testament and early church sources, it is increasingly recognized that Jesus communities celebrate Jesus as Woman Wisdom. Wisdom Christology is evidenced, for example, in the Colossians Hymn 1.15-20, 1 Corinthians 8.6, Hebrews 1.3, as well as in 1 Clement 36.1-2. While this is recognized by an increasing number of scholars, the implications of this startling reality have not been sufficiently explored. When the prominence of early Wisdom Christology is openly acknowledged a range of questions erupt to the surface about early church understandings. This paper will explore just one seam of this potent reality. In 1 Peter 2.2-3 the author calls for the community to be like neonate babies, who long to drink the pure and spiritual (word) milk. It is claimed that through doing this they 'will grow into salvation', if they 'have tasted that the Lord is good.' Scholars commonly interpret this imagery as a reference to Christ being the 'milk', yet fail to recognize that within this imagery Jesus is also being imaged as the source of this milk: as the divine breastfeeding mother. This textual reality will be exegeted and the passage contextualized within the broader setting of 1 Peter, and first century Wisdom Christology. This ancient invitation to long to breastfeed from Christ disrupts assumptions that understandings of mother Jesus were 'accidents' of medieval mysticism. In contrast, this first century imagery of breastfeeding from Christ invites recalibration of understandings of God, of gender, of Christ, of discipleship, and of our own interior spiritual posture. Furthermore, this understanding cleaves open assumptions about what it might mean to receive the kingdom 'as a little child' found elsewhere in the Second Testament.

### **Gendered Economies of Salvation**

Ida Simonsson, PhD student in Systematic Theology and Studies in Worldviews, Uppsala University, Sweden.

In my PhD project I explore different readings of the relationship between Christian Theology and economic theory and practice. In this paper, I will focus on a not so unusual kind of theological interpretation of this relationship, namely, the notion of the Christian tradition being radically opposed to the capitalist economy. As different examples of this position, I will use Stephen Long's Divine Economy, and William Cavanaugh's Being Consumed. Long, heavily indebted to John Milbank, criticizes what he calls the Weberian fact-value distinction, and with it liberation theologies that attempt to work from the sociological analysis of, for example, gendered economic injustices. Instead, Long sees a deeper and more radical conflict of worldviews between democratic capitalism and Christianity in general, and ecclesiology more specifically. Cavanaugh, on the other hand, draws upon both empirical studies of material conditions and analyses of the basic theoretical structures of

neoclassical economy to understand the capitalist economy, while simultaneously outlining a Eucharistic economy that can radically transform our economic reality. Hence, both of them rely on the practice and theory of the church to form economic resistance – Long with his focus on orthodoxy and ecclesiology, and Cavanaugh with his Eucharistic economy. However, none of them integrate feminist critique of the long tradition of gendered oppression within the church with their own constructive theology. This absence, together with Cavanaugh's silence on the issue of gendered economic injustice and Long's explicit refusal to take such an injustice as a "fact", makes me curious: Does the notion of the Christian tradition as offering salvation from the market economy risk reproducing traditional patriarchal patterns that have always, in a sense, included both theological and economical aspects? In my paper, I will explore the basic structure of the 'conflicttheories' of Long and Cavanaugh with this question in mind.

#### 4 b

#### **Remapping the Body of Christ and *imago Dei*: Intersex and Reimagining the 'One-Sex' Model**

Dr. Stephanie A. Budwey, Kirchliche Hochschule, Wuppertal, Germany.

I have recently conducted interviews with German intersex Christians for my post-doctoral project "Letting the Entire Body of Christ Speak: Practical Theological Reflections on Intersex Christian Narratives." Hearing the courageous and heartbreaking stories of these individuals is a privilege and their voices must be heard. One of the main themes that often comes up is that they were told they were not human beings because they did not neatly fit into the categories of 'female' and 'male.' Some were even called monsters. Christianity enforces this model of sexual dimorphism with the notion that to be a human being means to be created clearly 'female' or clearly 'male' in the image of God. When we look at the Christian tradition, however, we find that gender was not always so clearly defined, as the work of Coakley and Loughlin show. There are many instances where gender was seen to be fluid, reflecting the 'one-sex' model, which posited that there was one gender on a continuum, with the 'male' gradation being superior to the 'female.' Today our society is ruled by the 'two-sex' model that leaves no place for intersex individuals or anyone who does not fit into the stereotypical notions of 'feminine' and 'masculine', but rather stands between these two poles. Is it possible to retrieve the 'one-sex' model without the gendered hierarchies that were attached to it? What would happen if we saw everyone as simply 'human' and allowed each person to live at whatever point on the 'female'/'male' continuum they choose? How can we remap the Christian notion of the Body of Christ (drawing from Cornwall's work) and the *imago Dei* (drawing from Tonstad's work) to reflect this 'one-sex' model and support the notion that we are all human beings equally created in the image of God?

## **Beyond Birth and Death: Eschatology and Sexual Indifference in the Thought of Erik Peterson**

Mårten Björk, PhD student in Theology, Gothenburg University, Sweden.

In 1949 the German review *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* publishes an article on the origins of Christian asceticism in ancient Syria by the Catholic philologist and theologian Erik Peterson (1890-1960). Peterson analyses apocryphal texts on the holiness of virginity and the difference of the sexes and contrasts a Christian notion of asceticism from Gnostic and Greek philosophical perspectives by stating that for the Christians asceticism is an eschatological practice aimed at overcoming sexual difference: "As long as women give birth, death rules: the kingdom of God will come when the difference between the sexes has been overcome". The ideals of asceticism and virginity are not related to soteriological teachings by the Syrian Christians, Peterson notes, but to a living reality beginning with the resurrection of Christ and leading to a "reversal of all natural values that by pure necessity brings with it a conflict with the representatives of the current world." This suggests, Peterson writes, "that the asceticism of the Apocryphal Acts is more than an attempt to combat the concupiscence of the individual; it is about to stop give birth at all". The eunuchs and virgins of God do not repress their desires but rather develop a form of life that complicates the cycle of birth and death that characterize nature.

In this paper I investigate Peterson's discussion of asceticism as a subversion of the "natural" roles of men and women and relate it to his eschatological reading of the Catholic tradition. My thesis is that Peterson's insistence that asceticism instigates a "reversal of all natural values" not only entails an eschatology of sexual indifference and a notion of the kingdom of God that subverts the binary thought of gender that much Christian thinking defend, but that it more fundamentally leads to a concept of life not characterized by birth or death. It seems that for Peterson the fundamentals of Christian theology, the belief in the resurrection and the hope for eternal life, involve an eschatology of sexual indifference as the ascetics and virgins of the Church reveal that life cannot be identified with biological reproduction or the finitude of nature.