

ON THE ROAD

**Newsletter of the Anabaptist Association of
Australia and New Zealand**

Issue 8 June 2000

**Graeme Chatfield on the
Anabaptists as a gathered community**

News on the Hursts return to Australia

**Homepage on the Internet
<http://www.anabaptist.asn.au>**

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Correspondence:

Doug Hynd 54 Namatjira Dr. Stirling 2611

Tel: (02) 6288 9191

E:mail: hyndd@dynamite.com.au

Circulation additions, changes :

Gary Baker PO Box 1514 Armidale NSW 2350

Tel: (02) 6775 1752

E:mail: gbaker@northnet.com.au

From the Editor's Desk

Apologies for the delay in getting the May issue of the Newsletter out. There have been some important developments and I wanted to make sure I could bring you right up to date.

Some late, late reflections on Easter

Over the past few years as Easter approached I have found myself focusing on the account of the crucifixion and resurrection in Mark's Gospel.

Mark's gospel it seems to me speaks directly to the condition of a Christian community which seems to be confined in its practice of discipleship to a choice between conformity to one or another dimension of the prevailing culture. In other words it speaks directly to the condition of the Christian community at the end of the twentieth century.

Mark's account of the death and resurrection of Jesus offers us, as that community, an antidote to both an easy triumphalism, with its reaching for the incredibly happy ending, the gospel as a happiness option in a consumer society, and a liberalism which collapses the gospel account of Jesus into a tragic christian humanism in which God is practically absent as a reality from our day to day life.

These options have more in common than might appear immediately obvious. The outworkings of both is a conformity by the Christian community to the prevailing culture by avoiding in

apparently different ways the call to the journey of discipleship.

Ched Myers' reflections on the account of the resurrection in Mark 16 in **Who will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians** are hauntingly challenging. They point the Christian community to the path between the poles of fundamentalism and liberalism. The message to the disciples on that bewildering morning is that Jesus is "not here" (16:6), neither is he up in heaven (16:9). Interestingly the young man in this account does not suggest that the women should embark on some inward quest to find him. No new age self realisation here.

Myers is uncompromising:

There is only one place we can "see" the risen Jesus: "He is going before you into Galilee". (16:6) (415) ... Jesus goes on ahead of the church undomesticated by our christologies. We can encounter Jesus only by following him. "Discipleship", wrote the great Markan scholar Eduard Schweizer, "is the only form in which faith in Jesus can exist." but it is significant that Mark's epilogue stipulates a specific geography for this journey. the geography of Easter is not indeterminate or other worldly ... No, it is back in Galilee, where we were first called from denial to discontinuity." (416)

It is in the following of Jesus that we will encounter him, or rather discover that he is the one who is accompanying us. It is in the hard edged struggle with the reality of a world in which our experience of the joy and wonder of its creation is refracted through the experience of pain, suffering and the

temptation to deny our association with the God who does not offer us any easy way through.

It is in this narrative of discipleship as shared in the community that I continue to find the strength to sustain me on the journey and in the struggle to build a community which is shaped by the gospel.

This Newsletter

The rest of this newsletter contains the last of the material presented at our first national conference held in June last year, with an historical account provided by Graeme Chatfield of the Anabaptists and their character as a gathered community.

Mark Hurst shares with us some of the fruits of his reading. While Mary has been studying in a formal way Mark has not been neglecting the books.

The good news for supporters and friends of the Association is that the Hursts have now been granted a permanent residents visa and will be returning to Australia to take up their ministry here very soon. It has been a long struggle. Thanks to all those who have supported us in a variety of ways over the past two years as we have worked toward this result.

There is also news of the plans for the Melbourne conference in late January next year which Bessie Periera and some other hard working AAANZ members and supporters is working hard on.

Doug Hynd (Editor)

Making it on the Web -

Third Way Café

An Internet web site where the menu includes current events from a christian perspective and information on Mennonites.

www.thirdway.com

Presidents Column

Reconciliation and the Reconciler

Shortly after the massive march for reconciliation across Sydney Harbour Bridge, Ross Coleman, in a devotion for one of our committee meetings, shared his thoughts on 'changing a nation'. His thoughts have stuck in my mind ever since. Ross suggested that this huge challenge can be accomplished by sharing our faith, pursuing justice and reflecting mercy with one person at a time. In particular I have reflected on the concept of one on one reconciliation, one step at a time.

Recently, I was reminded in a powerful personal way of the power of one on one reconciliation. Firstly I attended a very simple, dignified and moving funeral service for a young aboriginal man whose parents were members of my congregation. The young man had taken his own life because of a conflict with his girl friend's family. The aboriginal pastor who led the service did not dwell upon the woes of a "stolen generation" but pled with young people to find their hope in Christ.

Emotionally I found myself feeling corporately implicated that somehow, in some way, my generation had marginalised a race of people through neglect and left them, bereft of hope in the secular sense.

This particular family has suffered at the hands of our criminal justice system and could easily have become embittered but instead have chosen to move on through Christ and express the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. As recipients of grace they responded in kind. A couple of weeks later the father served me communion, a first for our church, but a reminder that the great reconciler *par excellence* is Jesus Christ.

By contrast, recent events in Fiji serve as a reminder of the precarious nature of the reconciliation process. How sad that a nation with a strong Christian presence has yielded forth a group that seeks to obtain “justice” for indigenous people by using force. This is not to deny that there may well be injustices the indigenous Fijians have suffered, but rather to suggest that, as Ross Coleman pointed out, one on one reconciliation may well have been more fruitful in the long term. Anabaptists reject the use of force to solve individual and national problems. Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder warned us years ago of the temptation to use coercion in attempting to ‘make history come out right’.

Hans Schnell a second generation Swiss Anabaptist wrote in 1575 that:

The people in the kingdom of this world are born of the flesh, are earthly and carnally minded. The people in the kingdom of Christ are reborn of the Holy Spirit, live according to the Spirit, and are

spiritually minded. The people in the kingdom of this world are equipped for fighting against their enemies with carnal weapons – spear, sword, armour, guns, and powder. The people in Christ’s kingdom are equipped with spiritual weapons – the armour of God – to fight against the devil, the world, and their own flesh, together with all which arises against God and his Word, Eph.6; 2Cor. 10. The people in the kingdom of this world fight for a perishable crown and an earthly kingdom. The people in Christ’s kingdom fight for an imperishable crown and an eternal kingdom, 1Cor9....¹

While some Australian Anabaptists may feel uncomfortable with Schnell’s rigid church-world dualism, we can profit from the challenge to work for the kingdom of grace by one on one reconciliation and forgo the short term victories of the kingdom of coercion.

Ian Duckham

Executive

President: Ian Duckham
Vice President: Doug Hynd
Secretary: Ross Coleman
Treasurer: Gary Baker

Committee members

Bessie Pereira
Tim Dyer
Tim Costello - Public Officer
John Cox
Chris Marshall

We try as a committee to use electronic means of communication and the internet as much as possible to kept in

¹ C.J. Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, Herald Press, p. 111.

touch with each other. I have enclosed our email addresses to enable you to contact any of us by that means.

Gary Baker: gbaker@northnet.com.au
Tim Costello: csbc@vicnet.net.au
Ian Duckham:
iduckham@cyllene.uwa.edu.au
Tim Dyer: southland@vision.net.au
Doug Hynd: hyndd@dynamite.com.au
Chris Marshall: c.marshall@xtra.co.nz
Bessie Pereira: bessiep@jeack.com.au
John.Cox@ipaustralia.gov.au
Ross Coleman: Coleman@wolf.net.au

Treasurer's May Report

Thank you to all that have made donations. All legal fees for the visa process to date have been now paid. The account has a credit of \$784 at 31 May.

The ABN number and GST registration have been undertaken positioning the Association to be able to maintain its tax status as a charity.

Regular donations are helpful. The Committee has committed itself to raising \$5,000 per annum towards support of the Hursts following their return to Australia.

For periodic donations please ensure that your surname will appear on the receiving banks receipt. This is important for the record of our transactions. For periodic transfers, the AAANZ's National Australia Bank account number is 46 486 7622 and the branch number is 082-407. Donations made out to the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc (or AAANZ) can also be sent to me, at PO Box 1514 Armidale NSW 2350 Australia.

Shalom
Gary Baker

AAANZ 2001 CONFERENCE

**PEACEMAKING,
RECONCILIATION & MISSION**

24-26 JANUARY 2001

**WHITELY COLLEGE
MELBOURNE**

Details in the news section

**Put it in your diary now
A time to share, worship, learn and
dream together**

News

Visa for the Hursts

The Association has been working for nearly two years now to enable Mark and Mary Hurst to return to Australia and continue their ministry here. The following message was circulated to member, supporters and friends who are on the Internet by Ian Duckham back in May.

*Dear members, friends and supporters
of AAANZ,*

*It gives me great pleasure to pass on
some exciting news just to hand. Mark
and Mary Hurst have now been advised
that their visa applications have been*

successful. We are grateful to God for this answer to prayer and look forward to their arrival in Australia in the very near future. Once again, on behalf of the Association, I would like to thank all of you for your faithful prayer and financial support that has, at last, borne fruit on this joyful occasion.

Yours in Christ:

*Ian Duckham
President*

The following e.mail was received from the Hursts a couple of weeks later:

Our passports arrived today with our new visas attached. The letter from the Australian Embassy says:
"I am writing about your application for permanent migration....I am pleased to advise you that you and your included family members have been granted this visa. The visa allows you to enter Australia before 31 December 2000."

So it sounds like we have till the end of the year to get funds raised and enter Oz. This calls for another party tonite!

While we wanted to get to Oz before the Olympics, we are now thinking it might be cheaper to travel afterwards and will be easier to get housing in Sydney. It would also give us time to ship our stuff (which takes 3 to 4 months by boat).

We return to Pennsylvania next week to get jobs for the summer and do fundraising. We are open to the AAANZ's wisdom on the best time to get to Sydney.

Shalom,
Mark & Mary
The Committee is working to finalise

an agreement with Mark and Mary and the Eastern Mennonite Board of Mission to provide a framework for the ministry of the Hursts within Australia.

A world wide perspective

courier

A Quarterly Publication of Mennonite World Conference seeks to nurture community, communication and cooperation in the worldwide Mennonite family. For subscriptions contact Mennonite Press PO Box 307 North Newton Kansas, 67117, USA.

Web site: <http://www.mwc-cmm.org>

The Plough

Free Subscription Periodical
Plough Publishing is owned and operated by Bruderhof members and sells books on radical Christian discipleship, community, marriage, parenting, social justice, and spiritual life. We also publish a small periodical, The Plough, with articles on current issues the mainstream media tend to ignore, and reflective pieces on personal and social transformation and growth.

Sample copies of The Plough are available on request.

**Anabaptist Association
of Australia and New
Zealand
News of the Melbourne
Conference
25th - 27th January
2001**

We want to start telling people who are interested in Anabaptist ideals, about the Melbourne AAANZ Conference to be held at Whitley College early next year.

Why now? It's so early! Because this is the first time such a gathering is to be held in Melbourne. We want to share the planning with as many as possible as it unfolds over the next few months.

We will be needing to know more specifically the level of interest, and who might be wanting to educate or encourage the church today to embrace ideals of Anabaptist thought and practice.

You may well be needing to know more about Anabaptism historically, biblically and its relevance for the church today. You might be wanting resources for others to investigate. We can point you to some of these in the months ahead. At the end of this notice you will find a brief description of Anabaptist ideals.

We would be grateful if you would contact one of us to let us know of your interest, or to let us know if you do not wish to receive this newsletter in September and the final posting with registration forms in November.

This is 'it' so far!
Theme -

**"Peacemaking, Reconciliation
and Mission" -
(An Anabaptist Perspective for the
21st Century Church)**

Friday and Saturday - Presentation and Workshops with some time for enjoying Australia Day in Melbourne. Ideas are being formulated. Your input will be welcome for consideration!

Saturday night - Main presentation - Tim Costello speaking on the theme

Sunday morning - Special church services at a couple of venues - with the theme as emphasis

For further information -
<http://www.anabaptist.asn.au>

**AAANZ Melbourne sub-committee
for the conference -**

- Neil and Saralyn Horsburgh Phone 9481 0757 Email ccsm@bigpond.com
- Rev Dr David Wilson, Kingsley College Phone 9350 6681 Email kingcoll@jeack.com.au
- Bessie Pereira Phone 9893 2649 Email bessiep@jeack.com.au

Queries about the conference?
Contact Bessie .Pereira, 10 Viviani Crescent, Heathmont 3135

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Anabaptists - a gathered community

Graeme Chatfield

The following introductory notes on the history of Anabaptist churches by Graeme Chatfield were originally given as a talk presented to the AAANZ gathering at Wollongong in June 1999. Graeme is a lecturer at Morling College in Sydney

1. Defining Anabaptism

In the sixteenth century a growing number of people rejected the authority of both the Roman Catholic Church and those churches established by the reformers which used the powers of the civil state to enforce specific beliefs and practices on all the people in a particular state. Church and state authorities used a number of derogatory terms to describe such people. Martin Luther used the term 'schwarmer', Ulrich Zwingli called them

Catabaptists. One common term was Anabaptist which is a transliteration of a Latin word which simply means re-baptiser.

However, this was not a benign title, it carried overtones of a legal nature. In the Imperial Law of Justinian, a sixth century Roman Emperor, a mandatory death sentence was imposed on two heresies, anti-trinitarianism and re-baptism. In Europe in the sixteenth century renewed interest was being expressed in the Laws of Justinian and people convicted of either of these heresies could be summarily executed.

Anabaptists never used the term themselves. Rather they spoke of themselves as Brethren; Swiss Brethren, Hutterite Brethren and so on. They reject both the term and the legal implications. In their view infant baptism was not a valid baptism, therefore they had never been baptised. Consequently re-baptism was an inappropriate term to describe their baptism and themselves. They also rejected the charge that they were schismatic or heretics, arguing that the primitive church had been corrupted and required restoration not reformation. This meant that both the Roman Catholic Church and the territorial churches of the reformers were not seen as expression of the pure church of the New Testament and were not able to impose their authority on individuals.

Problems in definition

Defining Anabaptists has been contentious from the sixteenth century through to the present day. Baptism of believers on confession of faith in Christ is common to many of the sixteenth century groups that were later identified as Anabaptists.

Lutheran scholars identify as Anabaptist those groups that reject the authority of the national church. They have since the sixteenth century also associated such groups with the 1534-1535 Kingdom of Munster, (more on this later), as a logical outcome of Anabaptist heresy. In their view the heresy relates to both the separation from the duly authorised national church and by placing personal interpretation of the Bible over the Bible itself. This 'definition' by association with the Kingdom of Munster removed Anabaptists from serious historical study for centuries.

However, the twentieth century has seen an increasing interest in Anabaptist studies. Scholars from different Christian traditions as well as those without any explicit Christian association have undertaken studies in Anabaptism. Roland Bainton described Anabaptists as the 'left wing of the Reformation'. By that he meant the Anabaptists were essentially part of the reformation stream but took the principles of the Reformers to more extreme positions, particularly principles such as the priesthood of all believers and the understanding of the clarity of Scripture. These principles underpinned Anabaptist ideas of separation of church and state, rejection of a sacramental priesthood, and liberty of conscience.

Recent developments

The sociologist Ernst Troeltsch in his work *The social teaching of the Christian Churches* described Anabaptists as a classical expression of sect-type Christianity. He defined Anabaptists based on exclusiveness and voluntary gathering together with imposition of severe discipline within

the group, as well as theological position that differed from institutional national churches.

Anabaptist scholars also began to write for a wider audience than the descendants of the sixteenth century Anabaptists. Harold S. Bender in an address to the American Society of Church History in 1943 defined Anabaptists as those who lived a life of Discipleship, in communities based on voluntary membership that were separated from the world, and marked by love and non-resistance in all relationships. For Bender, these identifying principles were best enunciated by the Swiss Brethren in the 1527 Schleitheim Articles.

However, the definition was very restrictive eliminating many groups previously considered as Anabaptist.

Since Bender's work there has been a reaction from within historical circles, both by religious and secular historians. G.H. Williams in his major work *The Radical Reformation* continued to look at the Anabaptists as one element of the Radical expression of the Reformation. The Anabaptists in William's 1962 work were only one of three types of radicals: Anabaptists, Spiritualists and Evangelical Rationalists; in the revised third edition the simple tripartite division is removed and a more complex understanding of the nature of the various radical groups is provided.

This work of Williams takes into consideration the detailed work of a number of scholars, both from within the Mennonite world and from other Christian confessions, as well as from profane historians such as James Stayer and Clause Peter Clasen, who have effectively challenged the "evangelical

Anabaptist” definition as special pleading by Mennonite historians.

Mennonite historians have since accepted that groups which became examples of “evangelical Anabaptists” did not always hold to the distinctives as identified by Bender and others, but that the Schleithem confession on which Bender and Yoder based much of their work, had only minimal effect as a document imposing uniformity within Anabaptism.

Neither Catholic nor Protestant?

Some Mennonite historians, such as Walter Klaassen, have described the Anabaptists as neither Protestant nor Catholic, but a third distinctive grouping. Williams agrees with this view, and the general consensus of historians of the Reformation is that the Anabaptists were “a mosaic of groupings of dissenters without at the same time making claims to uniformity”. (ME 5, 24)

2. Anabatist Beginnings

Many historians argue that Anabaptists grew out of the radical response of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and **Thomas Muntzer**. Karlstadt was supposed to have influenced the Swiss Brethren and through them all Anabaptists with his views on baptism, the Lord’s Supper and congregationalism. Muntzer is seen as the more revolutionary influence as he contributed the chiliastic views of the peasants during the **Peasants’ War (1524 – 1525)** which later influenced the **Kingdom of Munster (1534 – 1535)**. Muntzer’s views on the use of the sword to slay the evil to prepare the way for the messianic king were seen as the direct link to the Anabaptists.

It is known that the **Swiss Brethren** leaders did seek contact with Thomas Muntzer in 1524, but it is not proven that Muntzer replied to their correspondence. It is also evident from the second letter of the Swiss Brethren that they specifically rejected Muntzer’s use of force. However, it is clear that Muntzer did influence greatly two other future Anabaptists, **Hans Denck and Hans Hut**. It was principally through Hans Hut, who was a very successful evangelist, that the chiliastic views of Muntzer carried over to some of the South German Anabaptist groups. Muntzer was captured with the Peasants’ Army at Thuringia in May 1525 and beheaded on 27 May 1525. **Hans Hut** carried out very effective evangelism in the South German – Austrian areas between his baptism by Hans Denck in 1526 and his death in prison in 1527. **Denck** was educated in the languages of the Bible - Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Apart from his contribution as a **writer** for the Anabaptists, he joined with Ludwig Haetzer to translate the Old Testament minor prophets. It was their translation work which formed the basis for both Luther’s and Zwingli’s Old Testament minor prophets.

The role of **Karlstadt** was more confined to his writings on baptism and the Lord’s Supper. While Karlstadt did reject infant baptism as a valid form of baptism, he nowhere advocated believer’s baptism. This aspect of Anabaptism comes directly from the Swiss Brethren in Zurich and the surrounding villages, Zollikon and Witikon.

Swiss Anabaptism

The leaders of the small group which later became known as the Swiss

Brethren began their careers as reformers as ardent followers of the Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich. Conrad Grebel (1498 – 1526) was the son of a noble family of Zurich, his father Jacob being a member of the City Council on a number of occasions. Conrad had some University education but did not complete his studies. On his return to Zurich he was caught up in the reform movement lead by Zwingli. His friend, Felix Manz, the son of the Canon of the Gross Munster in Zurich, had a similar education to Grebel and the two of them became involved in a Bible study class through which they not only confirmed Zwingli's view of justification by faith, but became independent in their views in a number of crucial areas, such as the payment of tithes to the church, the removal of images from the church, and the invalidity of infant baptism.

At the Second Zurich Disputation (October 1523) Grebel, Manz and some other became concerned at Zwingli's concession to the Zurich City Council to control the timing of the implementation of reform, specifically, the removal of images from the churches and the replacement of the mass with a new liturgy. The division between Zeingli and these young supporters continued to grow over the next year, the focus switching to the issue of infant baptism. In the villages of Zollikon and Witikon the pastors of the churches, who were also part of the Grebel circle, convinced many of the congregation to withhold their new born babies from being baptised.

The Zurich Council saw this as an attempt to overthrow the solidarity of the whole community and on the 17 January, 1525 ordered these people to present their children for baptism. Those citizens who did not comply

would be fined and possibly imprisoned; those who were not citizens of Zurich would be expelled.

Instituting believers baptism

The Grebel group gathered together on the evening of **21 January, 1525** to decide what to do. In the ensuing discussion, one of their number, George Blaurock demanded that he be baptised as a confessin of his faith in Christ and as an expression of his covenant to walk with his brethren as an expression of restored church. So **believer's baptism** was **instituted** among the Swiss Brethren, and through their missionaries, the message of believer's baptism was spread throughout Europe.

Grebel and Manz both left Zurich soon afterwards and preached their understanding of the gospel in the surrounding Swiss areas, and some areas of south Germany. The Anabaptist congregations in the immediate vicinity of Zurich was quickly suppressed through imprisonments and fines.

Other congregations that were began also suffered severe persecution at the hands of both Protestant and Catholic authorities. **Conrad Grebel** spent at least 7 months of his 20 months as an Anabaptist missionary in various prisons.

Early martyrs

Though he escaped from prison in Zurich in March 1526, he had died of the plague by August 1526. **Felix Manz** also suffered imprisonment for his faith on numerous occasions. The Zurich authorities warned Manz that if he returned to Zurich and continued to preach about believer's baptism he would be arrested and executed. Manz

did return to Zurich, was arrested and after a trial in which he was found guilty of breaking his oath not to return and preach Anabaptist doctrine, he was drowned in the Limmat River, which divides the city of Zurich, on 5 January, 1527. Manz has the “honour” of being the first Anabaptist martyr, the first of many!

George Blaurock likewise suffered martyrdom, but in his case he was burnt at the stake on 6 September, 1529 in the Tyrol at the hands of the Catholic Austrian authorities. Blaurock was a gifted and fiery evangelist, who had the same impact in the areas he visited, as Hans Hut did in the South German – Austrian areas.

Arguably the most influential over the first generation Anabaptists was **Michael Sattler** (c. 1490 – 1527). Sattler was a monk, and later prior, at the Benedictine monastery of St Peter’s in Freiberg, but left to follow reformation teaching and to marry. He came to Zurich and was baptised by Wilhelm Reublin, one of the Swiss Brethren, and immediately became a very influential Anabaptist missionary. He later spent some time in **Strassburg** and lead the growing group of Anabaptists in that city, until his expulsion in late 1526.

The Schleithem Confession

Sattler’s greatest contribution, however, took place at the small village of Schleithem on 24 February, 1527, just north west of the Swiss city state of Schaffhausen. Here Sattler presented a series of articles to a gathering of Anabaptists, dealing with matters such as discipline, the sword, oaths, church order, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and separation from the world. These articles became known as the

Schleithem Confession, and acted as the guidelines for the Swiss Brethren. It has also been argued that the Schleithem Confession greatly influenced the other Anabaptist communities of South Germany.

Unfortunately the Schleithem gathering was betrayed and many of the participants were arrested and subsequently executed. Sattler and his wife were arrested at their home in Horb. He was tried by the Austrian authorities on 17 May, 1527 and executed three days later after undergoing some horrendous torture at Rottenberg. Sattler’s wife was drowned in the Heckar river eight days later.

Basil Hubmaier

South German and Moravian

Balthasar Hubmaier was the only first generation Anabaptist leader who had been University trained and awarded a Doctorate in Theology. His patron throughout his University career was the renowned Dr John Eck, who debated with Luther at Leipzig.

Hubmaier also has the distinction of being quite famous in his career before he became an Anabaptist. He had been the vice chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt, and later the Cathedral preacher and pilgrimage preacher at the famous Chapel of the Beautiful Mary at Regensberg. The Chapel to the Schone Maria had been built on the site of a Jewish synagogue in the city, and Hubmaier had played a crucial role in the expulsion of the Jews from that city. However, in 1521 he moved from his high profile position in Regensberg to the small town of Waldshut on the Rhine. Here Hubmaier first moved towards a Lutheran understanding and then towards a Zwinglian position.

Eventually by early 1525 Hubmaier had rejected Zwingli's position on infant baptism, and that Easter, 16 April 1525, Hubmaier allowed himself to be baptised by Wilhelm Reublin. In the following days Hubmaier baptised over 300 of the townsfolk of Waldshut, ie. over one third of the town's population. The Anabaptist church in Waldshut was however short lived, as the Austrian forces of Ferdinand of Austria overran the town on 6 December, 1525. Hubmaier had managed to flee the town along with his wife and some supporters the previous day.

Hubmaier was captured by the Zurich authorities and involved in a recantation of his beliefs, which he later retracted. This resulted in his being tortured; a further recantation was written and delivered and Hubmaier was released. His journey took him through Augsburg, where he met and may have baptised Hans Denck, and may have influenced Denck's writings. He then made his way to Nikolsberg in Moravia where through his preaching and diplomacy he established an Anabaptist church.

Unfortunately for Hubmaier, Ferdinand of Austria became King of Moravia and Hubmaier and his wife were handed over to the Austrian authorities in July 1527. They were held in prison until March 1528, when Hubmaier's trial was concluded. This time there was no recantation, and he was burnt at the stake on 10 March, 1528 in Vienna. His wife was drowned in the Danube three days later.

Hubmaier's contribution to Anabaptism was chiefly through his writings on Baptism and Freewill. He also contributed significantly on the issues of church order, discipline and liturgy. However, his views on the legitimate

use of the sword, and the possibility of a magistrate being a Christian, put him at odds with the Swiss Brethren and the pacifist Anabaptists of Moravia, who split from his church after his arrest and later became the Hutterite Brethren.

The Kingdom of Munster and the Netherlands

Anabaptism came to the Netherlands (Holland) through the preaching of **Melchior Hofmann**, a furrier and bookseller who had started out as a Lutheran reformer, but due to a series of set backs among the Lutherans, developed his independent position. He was much more open to the present and continuous work and revelation of the Spirit in the lives of people than Luther would countenance.

Hofmann was baptised by an Anabaptist in April 1530, and two months later was in Emden. Holland was ripe for this fiery evangelist for Anabaptism, and soon large Anabaptist congregations were formed in major cities across Holland. Hofmann did not stay in Holland, but carried out an itinerant ministry in the low countries and north Germany. In 1533 he was convinced that the prophecy of an old Frieslander Anabaptist was true. He had been told that if Hofmann was arrested and spent six months in prison, the Lord would return. Hofmann therefore went to Strassburg, was arrested and imprisoned.

The excitement generated by the prophecy so stirred up the Anabaptist communities in Holland and North Germany, that when Jan Mattys and Jan van Leyden came to the city of Munster preaching that Christ was about to return and establish the New Jerusalem at Munster, many were convinced, including the leading Lutheran reformer

of Munster, Bernard Rothman. Rothman became the theological writer for these other two prophets, who styled themselves Enoch and King David respectively. Throughout 1534 the Anabaptists community in Munster grew to such a size that it successfully replaced the city council. This made it possible for Jan van Leyden to take control of the city.

The Lutheran princes of the area saw Munster as a threat to their authority, and when various excesses were reported as occurring in Munster they marched against the city. The Kingdom of Munster was put down with terrible loss of life and quite horrible torture inflicted on the captured Anabaptists. Munster became for both the Protestants and Catholics a focal point for their propaganda against the Anabaptists. Munster was held up to be the true nature of Anabaptism; Anabaptists might appear peaceful and pure in their lives, but eventually moral corruption and social destruction were the outcome of their teaching.

There were, however, in Holland those Anabaptists who reject the whole tenor of the Munsterites. Such were Obbe and Dirk Philips. They insisted that Anabaptists were pacifists, that their call to discipleship and discipline brought holy living, not moral decay and excess. Dirk Philips became a very influential writer for Dutch Anabaptists, though he did not have the personal following or charisma of the most influential Dutch Anabaptist leader, Menno Simons.

Menno Simons

Menno Simons **was** influenced by Melchior Hoffman and was associated through Hoffman with the Munster Anabaptists. However Menno he

separated from them over the issue of using violence to usher in the Kingdom of God.

In 1536 Menno declared to his congregation his rejection of Roman Catholic theology and his acceptance of Anabaptist ideas. He left his position as priest and went into hiding. He was baptised by Obbe Philips and later ordained as pastor of an Anabaptist congregation.

Initially Menno focused his writing and debating on the nature of true conversion, but later in his ministry he shifted his attention to matter regarding the purity of the church and matters of church discipline. He engaged in heated debate both other Anabaptists and the reformers over his long period of ministry. Modern day Mennonites take their name from Menno Simons, though his was not the most popular group of Anabaptists with the Dutch Anabaptist community.

Second generation leaders.

In Moravia **Jacob Hutter** led a breakaway group from Hubmaier's church in Nikolsberg, and developed the **Hutterian Brethren**, who had taken literally the injunction of Christ to have all things in common (Acts 2:42ff). These Anabaptists lived in communities called Bruderhofs. Their most influential writer was **Peter Reidermann**, who had been influenced in his theology by both Hubmaier and Hans Denck.

The Hutterites lived peacefully in Moravia until the outbreak of the Thirty Year's War (1618). After that time they suffered much at the hands of the Catholic authorities and later the Turks. As pacifists their only response to such persecution was to move. Hutterites

migrated first to Hungary then to Transylvania and then to the Ukraine, and finally to the mid-west of the USA.

Pilgram Marpeck

Pilgrim Marpeck took over the leading role among the Anabaptists of South Germany. Though not a trained theologian, in fact he was a city engineer who worked on dam construction, Marpeck made an invaluable contribution. He was involved in debates with Martin Bucer of Strassburg, and also with Caspar Schwenckfeld.

In the first debate Marpeck defined for the Anabaptists of South Germany, Switzerland and Holland their understanding of the interpretation of Scripture, in which he made the distinction that the Old Testament is to be distinguished from the New Testament, since Christ who is the centre of the New Testament had brought the authority of the Old Testament to completion. In his debate with Schwenckfeld he rejected the position that the Spirit was independent of the written word, and that revelation of the will of God could therefore occur without reference to the written word, the Bible.

3. DISTINCTIVE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

The Gathered Church

Baptism for the Anabaptists became the outward sign of an inward faith which being confessed through baptism allowed entrance to the church. The church was a voluntary gathering of only those who professed faith in Christ, who had been baptised and who covenanted together to live for Christ

under mutual discipline. This view of the church was radical in the 16th century, as all other churches were in one way or other equated with the whole of the community in which they existed.

“The church, according to the Anabaptists, is a voluntary and exclusive fellowship of truly converted believers in Christ, committed to follow Him in full obedience as Lord; it is a brotherhood, not an institution. It is completely separate from the state, which is to have no power over the church; and the members of the church in turn do not hold office in the magistracy. There is to be complete freedom of conscience, no use of force or compulsion by the state or church; faith must be free.” (ME, V 594)

Biblical Interpretation

As was mentioned above, Pilgrim Marpeck refined the Anabaptist understanding of the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. This allowed the Anabaptists to reject those doctrine they saw developed from Old Testament texts, for example infant baptism based on the idea of a continuing covenant from the Old Testament through to the New. Other aspects of Anabaptist interpretation include their view that only those things which are commanded in Scripture, with priority given to the New Testament, are to be allowed. Zwingli held that those things that are not specifically rejected are permitted in the church; while Luther argued that all those things not commanded are permitted.

Discipleship

Discipleship incorporates for the Anabaptists concepts of following

Christ and love of the brethren. To follow Christ meant for the Anabaptists total obedience to the commands of Christ and his teachings. If Christ commanded them not to use the sword, they obeyed.

Similarly when Anabaptists reject the accepted social hierarchy and called each other Brother or Sister, rejecting all differentiation according to social status or position. Love of the brethren meant for the Anabaptists more than a sentimental feeling towards each other, it literally meant a willingness to die for the brethren even as Christ had died for them. This they understood as bearing the cross and total self denial.

Pacifism

The Anabaptists became known after 1535 for their pacifism. Their understanding of the separation of the church from the world, and their literal interpretation of the New Testament teachings of Jesus concerning rejection of the sword led them to this position. Today, the American peace movement owes much to the Mennonites of Canada and North America.

4. CLASH WITH STATE CHURCHES

The Lutheran Church followed Luther's line that all who differed from Luther on his understanding of the Lord's Supper and the method of interpreting Scripture were heretics and to be persecuted. This increased for the Anabaptists after the Kingdom of Munster incident in 1535. However, among some of the Reformed Church numerous debates were held with representatives from Anabaptist groups. This was particularly so in Strassburg, and in Switzerland after the death of Zwingli.

Heinrich Bullinger conducted two debates with Anabaptists at Bern in 1537 – 38. During the course of this debate the differences between the Reformed and the Anabaptists became more evident, and the method of persecution of the Reformed churches followed the outline used at the Bern debates. Although the Reformed churches appeared to give the Anabaptists a hearing, the debates were never something the Anabaptists could win, rather they were a form of trial. After such debates it was not uncommon for the Anabaptist protagonists to be either expelled, imprisoned, and sometimes executed.

The most vigorous opponent of the Anabaptists was King Ferdinand of Austria. As early as 1525 Ferdinand has published decrees for the eradication of heresy from all the lands he controlled. By heresy he meant anything that was not of the Roman Catholic Church.

By 1527 Ferdinand had specifically identified Anabaptists as heretics worthy of special attention. He considered "the third baptism" as the best antidote for Anabaptism. After Ferdinand succeeded Charles V as Emperor his decrees were extended to the whole of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Anabaptists suffered incredible persecution, the record of which is kept for us in both the *Martyrs Mirror* and the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*.

Further Reading

For those interested in further reading the following books provide a useful starting point.

C. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History* 3rd ed. (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1993)

- W.R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* revd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975)
- T. George, *The Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988)
- Meic Pearse, *The Great Restoration: The religious radicals of the 16th and 17th centuries* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998)
- G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* 3rd revd ed. (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, Vol XV, 1992)

BOOK REVIEWS

Church Conflict

Never Call Them Jerks, Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior by Arthur Paul Boers, Alban Institute, 1999.

Alban Institute produces some of the most helpful and readable books dealing with issues around the congregational life of churches. This recent one from the Canadian Mennonite pastor Arthur Paul Boers lives up to the high standard set by previous Alban publications.

Mennonite Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, and occasional visitor to Australia, David W. Augsburg writes the book's Forward. He remembers Boers as "a difficult student" in seminary partly because "he troubled the waters". He describes Boers the student as "extremely bright often passionate" with a "deep concern for justice" and a "willingness

to get embroiled in tough situations".

The tough situation Boers deals with this time is church conflict and particularly the pastor's response to it. Boers comes at the issue from a "family systems" approach. He draws on personal experiences and learnings from some of the top names in this field - Speed Leas, Peter Steinke, and Edwin Friedman. He also throws in gems he has picked up over the years from his friend and mentor Henri Nouwen.

This is one of the best books I have read that is able to pull together the wisdom of these different church conflict consultants and writers in one small, very readable volume. He explains family systems language and concepts in a way that someone with no background in this field can understand. One quote from Friedman explains why this book is so necessary:

...Religious institutions are the worst offenders at encouraging immaturity and irresponsibility. In church after church, some member is passively-aggressively holding the whole system hostage, and no one wants to fire him or force her to leave because it wouldn't be 'the Christian thing to do'. (18)

We should not be surprised by having difficult people in church because as another quote reminds us: "Religious systems attract dysfunctional persons." (24) Boers talks about family system issues like triangling, projection, transference, and bullying and gives helpful advice on dealing with these in the church context. One of the strengths of the book is that Boers tells some of his own story, both the successes and failures. He shares what he has learned:

My greatest learning on dealing with difficult behavior in church: Pay attention to yourself first. If you perceive and treat others as enemies, they will look more and more like enemies. (39)

Physician heal thyself! There are no quick fixes here to deal with "them", only ways to work at healing ourselves and allowing healing to happen in our wounded church bodies.

Let's Talk, Communication Skills and Conflict Transformation by Barry C. Bartel, Faith & Life Press, 1999.

This study guide is a revision and update of Bartel's 1983 study. One advantage of the new version is that it includes a "Leader's Guide" that used to come as a separate book. The back cover calls this book "a tool to get Christians thinking, talking, and living out effective skills in interpersonal communication, transforming conflict into growth.

As a workbook for group study, *Let's Talk* includes a personal inventory on our conflict management styles, discussion guides, personal reflection exercises, role plays for active listening and appropriate speaking, and much more."

Ron Kraybill, Associate Professor at Eastern Mennonite University, and the Director of their Conflict transformation Program, says in the Forward "Be cautious...you may become a different person if you enter fully into the material in this book. Few things change people and make them grow like conflict."

We used the first edition of Bartel's workbook in Sunday School classes

and church and community workshops and found it to be very useful in teaching conflict transformation skills. We look forward now to using this new edition with its additions from what has been written, studied, and practiced in the area of conflict management in the fifteen years since the study was first published.

Making Peace with Conflict, Practical Skills for Conflict Transformation Edited by Carolyn Schrock-Shenk and Lawrence Ressler, Herald Press, 1999.

Here is a practical guide to understanding and transforming conflict based on biblical and Anabaptist principles. Over twenty noted authors shaped by many experiences and cultures tell of lessons taught by walking conflict's holy ground. Some insights will be familiar, some new, and some may trigger new conflict! (Back Cover)

This book was a project of Mennonite Conciliation Service, a program of Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. The seventeen chapters are short, readable, and each end with discussion questions which make this book useful for group study. The topics covered include foundations of conflict transformation, communication, problem solving, forgiveness, healing, power, gender, race, conflict in the family, in the congregation, and global conflict. It is a useful introduction to conflict transformation with plenty of examples from real life situations. While the illustrations are mostly North American ones, the issues dealt with are universal. This book is not a workbook like Bartel's but would be a useful companion to his study guide for a group or individual interested in learning the skills of conflict transformation.

Beyond Religion?

Religious No More, Building Communities Of Grace & Freedom, Mark D. Baker, InterVarsity Press, 1999.

While browsing in one of my favorite Christian bookstores I came across this book. The title caught my eye and then when I read the information about the author on the back cover I was really hooked. "Mark D. Baker (Ph.D in theology and ethics, Duke University) is a theologian and Mennonite missionary. He has observed and ministered to the church in Honduras for ten years."

I had never heard of him before so I was interested in what this unknown "Mennonite missionary" had to say. I was not disappointed. Baker writes about the Protestant churches in Honduras who learned a Christianity of rules from American missionaries and not authentic Christianity. This book is a critique of this rule-keeping religion.

Baker uses "religion" in a negative way: *By religiosity I mean our common human tendency to attempt through our efforts to gain security from God, the gods or something that acts as a god in our lives. I am not contrasting 'true religion' and 'false religion.' Rather I contrast religion with biblical Christianity...I am contrasting religious Christianity with authentic Christianity.*(37)

In looking at the faith that the missionaries brought to Honduras Baker says:

A key weakness of the Christianity evangelicals brought to Latin

America is that it is not sufficiently antireligious. Evangelicals tend not to confront profoundly enough the religious attitudes and practices new Christians bring with them, nor to think critically enough about how easily people's religious drive can seize hold of elements of the Christian faith and turn them into religion.(44)

Part of the problem was that "the missionaries...were not sufficiently self-critical of the religion they brought with them." (45) Baker describes the "drive to be right" and the desire to be "securely in" the right group as part of the religion he practiced that kept him away from authentic Christianity. After chapters on "Counterfeit Community" and a critique of "Individualistic-Spiritualized Christianity" he turns to an examination of the book of Galatians. The traditional reading of Galatians does not sufficiently "proclaim freedom from religion and freedom for community." (78)

Using the scholarship of people like Richard Hays and Jacques Ellul, Baker weaves for us a different understanding of the letter to the Galatians. In his reading of Paul's letter he sees "freedom from the enslaving power of religion and its divisive boundary lines" and the "possibility of living together as a community in a totally new way." (135)

This is a timely book for Mennonites in North America as the church here is struggling with issues of membership, boundary lines, and questions of "who's in and who's out?" Baker uses the image of a big tent with no walls for his picture of the church as opposed to a building with secure walls and doors. Questions of boundaries always arise for organizations (like AAANZ). Baker's book would be a

helpful resource in the discussion of these issues.

Homosexuality and Christian faith - finding our way forward?

Homosexuality And Christian Faith, Questions of Conscience for the Churches, Edited by Walter Wink, Fortress Press, 1999.

The most divisive issue in the North American Mennonite church scene at the moment is homosexuality. It is affecting the integration process of the two major Mennonite denominations. The question of committed relationships between homosexual couples has groups drawing up sides and some threatening to pull out of the denominational structures if their view is not upheld.

This volume edited by Walter Wink presents one side of the issue. Nineteen American church leaders, scholars, and activists "invite the reader to open his or her heart to the Spirit, to Gospel values, and to full acceptance of gay and lesbian persons in the 'family of God.'" (back cover) The chapters are short and well-written. The authors write with passion and conviction. One church leader whose son is gay says: "We would rather err on the side of helping hurting people than on the side of hurting helpless people. Lord, have mercy upon us!" (30)

The authors are people I respect and several of them I have met. But I came away not fully convinced by their arguments. I do agree wholeheartedly with these words in the book's "Afterword":

Wherever we come out on this issue, however, that same spirit of Jesus

surely calls us to respect, honor, and be civil toward those with whom we differ. No moral matter should be regarded as so urgent as to permit dehumanizing and demonizing our opponents. Jesus did not speak out on homosexuality, but he did command us, openly and unequivocally, to love our enemies - even when they choose to behave unlovingly toward us...we can act Christianly toward one another while still holding to our convictions. There is no room for lovelessness, hatred, or intolerance. God is confronting both sides of this controversy with an opportunity to transcend our verbal violence and put-downs, and to learn how to love, cherish, and value those whose positions are different from our own. We can treat this controversy, not as a sign of the church's decadence or its disobedience, but as a marvelous opportunity to learn to love as Jesus commanded us to love.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

No Future Without Forgiveness, Desmond Tutu, Doubleday, New York, 1999.

I remember taking my children to the Sydney Opera House forecourt to see Nelson Mandela being welcomed after he was released from prison in South Africa. He chose Australia as one of the first countries to visit to say thank you for the support in the "struggle" against Apartheid. It was a moving moment of history that I hope my children never forget. It was one of those rare moments for people who long for peace and justice in our world. I remember being told by fellow Christians in the early 1980's that a boycott of South Africa would never work because the whites there would never change. They thought it was a hopeless situation that would

end some day in a bloodbath. What a joy to see what has happened instead.

Desmond Tutu's latest book tells the story of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which he headed and the process of healing that South Africa has entered into. He praises Mandela throughout his book and credits him for much of the success the country has experienced in the reconciliation process. South Africa is not the garden of Eden - it has a long way to go to solve problems of poverty and crime left over from the Apartheid era. But in choosing to deal with its past through a truth and reconciliation process based on restorative justice rather than retributive justice, flawed as the process was, it provides "a beacon of hope, a possible paradigm for dealing with situations where violence, conflict, turmoil, and sectional strife have seemed endemic." (282)

Tutu says "God does have a sense of humor. Who in their right minds could have ever imagined South Africa to be an example of anything but the most ghastly awfulness, of how not to order a nation's race relations and its governance? We South Africans were the unlikeliest lot and that is precisely why God has chosen us...God wants to show that there is life after conflict and repression - that because of forgiveness there is a future. (282)

The book is a fascinating study in the practical application of forgiveness on a national scale. Tutu begins with an explanation of how African thought differs from Western thought. Western thought says "I think therefore I am." It is very individualistic where African thought is captured in the idea of "ubuntu" that says "I am human because I belong, I participate, I share." (31)

In African thought then, "to forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest. What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me."(31)

There is a sense that we all - oppressors and victims - are in this together and what is best for me is tied up in what is best for you. This reminds me of Jeremiah 29 where the Israelite captives were told by Jeremiah that their "shalom" was wrapped up in the "shalom" of their Babylonian captors.

Tutu says he operates from a theology that says we all are capable of good and evil and are all capable of changing. Repentance and forgiveness are possible. The book shows both the depths of what humans are able to sink to and the heights we are able to achieve.

After telling about some of the terrible abuses of human rights that were reported before the TRC, Tutu says the following:

There is an awful depth of depravity to which we all could sink...we possess an extraordinary capacity for evil...all of us...it is important to note that those guilty of these abuses were quite ordinary folks. They did not grow horns on their foreheads or have tails hidden in their trousers. They looked just like you and me. (144)

But he adds the other side of the story, the amazing accounts of forgiveness and reconciliation. After one such exchange before the TRC, Tutu stopped the proceedings and said:

Can we just keep a moment's silence, please, because we are dealing with things that are very, very deep. It isn't easy, as we all know, to ask forgiveness and it's also not easy to forgive, but we

are people who know that when someone cannot be forgiven there is no future.(151)

Tutu says:

Just as those who have been capable of the most horrendous atrocities turn out to be ordinary human beings like you and me, so too those who have demonstrated noteworthy instances of the capacity to forgive could easily be the man or woman living down the street. Wonderfully, forgiveness and reconciliation are possible anywhere and everywhere and have indeed been taking place, often unsung, nremarked." (155)

God depends on us, puny, fragile, vulnerable as we may be, to accomplish God's purposes for good, for justice, for forgiveness and healing and wholeness. God has no one but us...God believes in us. God depends on us to help make this world all that God wants it to be. (158-159)

At the end of the book, Tutu talks about the personal cost of doing this type of peacemaking. It is draining and can be destructive of health and relationships. He talks about two styles of dealing with people in pain that I found helpful - the vacuum cleaner and the dishwasher.

The vacuum cleaner sucks up all the dirt and keeps it in the bag; whereas the dishwasher cleans the dirty dishes and immediately spews forth all the filth into the drains...Jesus acted more like a dishwasher than a vacuum cleaner. He absorbed all that came to him and then, as it were, passed it out, passed it on to the Father.(285)

Walking and Talking

On the Pilgrims' Way, Conversations on Christian Discipleship During a

Twelve-day Walk Across England by J. Nelson Kraybill, Herald Press, 1999.

The last two books I want to suggest grow out of the British Anabaptist Network. This first one is written by Nelson Kraybill, a former Programme Director at the London Mennonite Centre. He was the cofounder of the Bridge Builders Mediation Service in London, and was coeditor of the British Network's magazine **Anabaptism Today**. Nelson is presently serving as president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, USA.

Herald Press asked Kraybill to write a book on Christian discipleship as a "guide for new Christians and others seeking to know God more fully; it was to be written from an Anabaptist perspective." (7) He could not find time to work writing into his busy schedule but got the "idea of combining several experiences I have found life-giving: prayer, Bible study, silence, conversation with friends, and walking in the English countryside." (7)

He organized a two week pilgrimage to Canterbury cathedral and set it up so that friends would meet him each day and walk and talk on that day's leg of the journey. He conversed with people from numerous Christian traditions - Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Bruderhof, independent, and Mennonite.

He recorded his conversations in a little notebook he carried with him and wrote this book as a kind of diary with added reflections. Pictures of people and places from his pilgrimage are found throughout the book. Many of you will recognize people like Alan and Eleanor Kreider who have spoken in Australia and New Zealand. The basics of

Christian discipleship from an Anabaptist perspective are woven through each chapter. Questions for reflection found at the end of each chapter make this book another one for group study.

The book is very readable. I found myself drawn to Kraybill's walking partners. Their rich experiences of walking with God come through clearly and demonstrate the great variety that God has in his kingdom.

Post-Christendom churches

Church Planting, Laying Foundations, Stuart Murray, Paternoster Press, 1998.

This is the second British book I would recommend. Murray is the present Editor of **Anabaptism Today** and will be in Australia later this year teaching in Sydney. This book is a good introduction to him and the experience he has had of planting new churches in Britain.

Murray has been involved in church planting for over twenty years. He lectures at Spurgeon's College where he is Oasis Director of Church Planting and Evangelism. His previous books include **The Challenge of the City** and **Explaining Church Discipline**. I had the privilege of taking a short course with him on "Anabaptist Evangelism and Church Planting" this past summer in the USA.

The back cover says this "is a book for practioners, but for practioners who are prepared to think, and who are willing to ask searching questions about the kinds of churches needed in a post-Christian and post-modern culture." It is not only for church-planting practioners" but for anyone interested in answering the question "How can the

church faithfully minister today?"

Chapter seven, entitled "Church Planting and the Ethos of the Church", could stand alone as a booklet and would be worth the price. Murray first deals with the question "Why do people leave churches?" where he cites Morris Stuart's excellent book **So Long, Farewell and Thanks for the Church** and others who have written on this question.

Murray argues: *...the demands of mission in a post-Christian society require us to discover the reasons why people leave our churches - and to avoid planting any more of these kinds of churches.* (173) He moves on to talk about what features might best characterize post-modern churches:

They will be communities where doubts can be expressed without fear of censure. (185) *Such churches will make more use of dialogue than monologue.* (185) *A radical commitment to the priesthood of all believers, which breaks the interpretive monopoly of the preacher, will be needed to undergird such communities.* (186) *...will embrace enthusiastically the renewed interest in spirituality evident in contemporary culture* (186)

In their evangelism...invite others not only to join them on a journey but also to participate with them in a story, to contribute their own story to the many other stories that together comprise the big story. (188) *Church planting is about establishing new communities of faith.* (189) (Communities not characterized by a "proliferation of church meetings, but by their reduction.")

He goes on to argue that *We need to plant not only post-modern churches but also post-Christendom churches.* (190) These are some of their characteristics:

...the church is liberated from the corrupting influence of political, economic and social power. As a powerless minority of resident aliens in a culture that no longer accords Christianity special treatment, the church is freed to live and witness in new ways. (191)

Powerless churches have an opportunity to abandon the Constantinian 'moral majority' stance that understandably irritates a post-Christendom culture, and recover their biblical calling to be a 'prophetic minority'. (192)

A key element in their testimony will be surprise...They will not be easy to pigeon-hole as right-wing or left-wing, for their agenda will be broad and they will make unusual connections between different issues...Their ethos will be attractive and yet disturbing, familiar and yet strange, conformed and yet deviant, as befits communities of resident aliens." (192-193)

"They choose to be identified with the poor, the weak, the marginalized, those without voice or status." (193)
"...responding to the challenge to be goodnews to the poor, may explore creative ways of practising Jubilee." (195)
"...will revel in the freedom this pluralist society offers to commend the gospel humbly, boldly and sensitively to any who will listen, including those who are currently adherents of other religions or secular ideologies." (196)

In the busy world we are living in, Murray says that part of the alternative we offer to the world is a spirituality that speaks to this busyness. *Stillness, peace and the space simply to be are vital components in a spirituality for contemporary living.*" He quotes Robert Warren who says: "A missionary church will be an oasis of peace and quiet, in a frantic world, able not to be driven by doing but reflecting on experience before moving on." (200)

Murray's bias is for churches committed to "mission" over "maintenance". This comes through clearly in the book. He believes what David Bosch says, that "mission is the mother of theology" (258).

There is much more I could say about this book. It is 302 pages long and packed full of insightful questions and observations, church planting models, church attendance trends, and challenges for us to build the kingdom of God in our day.

Shalom,
Mark

Taking a fresh look at John Howard Yoder

For The Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical by John Howard Yoder
Eerdmans, 1997

John Howard Yoder is best known for his New Testament studies in *The Politics of Jesus*. He is also reasonably well known for a series of works on pacificism and the just war.

To the extent that he has a public profile it is as a new testament scholar and ethicist. He would have however resisted such a designation and I think

quite rightly. His work, much of which is not easily available, when viewed as a whole stands within the realm of theology more broadly conceived.

The scope of Yoder's work and his passion about the church becomes clear in collections of essays such as *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Univ of Notre Dame press, 1984) and *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Edited by Michael Cartwright Eerdmans, 1994).

The collection of essays in *For the Nations* falls into this category. Yoder describes the focus of this collection of essays in the following terms:

Since the Christian community is normally a message bearing minority in whatever world we are concerned with, there is no setting where the missionary dimension of being a Christian should not demand ... clarification. In their several different ways these essays are about that definitional task.

The span of subject matter in this collection from Mesopotamia to the present seeks to make a theological and practical point by its disciplinary breadth. The perspective being advocated here is not as some have sort to see it primarily, or merely, an idiosyncratic way to read the New Testament, or merely a minority bias within the repertory of models of Reformation in the sixteenth century. This is a coherent posture which is pertinent up and down the centuries, just as the Hebrew and christian story is all one story from Abraham to our own time. (8)

What is interesting about this collection is that so many of the pieces included are occasional. The thinking was done

in response to a specific context and an invitation to act as a theological resource person or to act as a representative of the Anabaptist tradition in some form of colloquium.

The balance of the material is from 1970's though one piece has its origins in the mid 60's and several pieces are from the early 1990's. What runs through the material whatever the occasion is a focus by Yoder on the character of the church and its inescapable engagement with the world. His account of the gathered community as a witnessing community engaged with the world in mission is coherent and consistent whether he is talking about the arms race or the nature of democracy.

Yoder is forceful in making the case that the minority stance is not culturally irrelevant or world denying.

In one of the most interesting essays in the book "*See how they go with their face to the Sun*" he simultaneously opens up the experience of exile of the Hebrew people as interpreted by Jeremiah as a pivotal moment and paradigm for the church's identity and task and locates a crucial point for connection between the Jewish and Christian communities.

The account Yoder offers of the vocation of the diaspora, the innovation of the synagogue and Jeremiah's injunction to seek the welfare of the city are opened up in a manner which is worth substantial reflection and challenges us to reread not only the Old and New Testament but subsequent church history. Much that we have regarded as settled has fresh light thrown on it.

What makes this work worth reading is that it is theology in the service of the church and its mission which takes God's engagement with the world seriously.

Doug Hynd

Resources

Anabaptism Today: christian discipleship in the radical tradition

This magazine is published three times a year.(Spring, Summer Autumn) by the Anabaptist Network Trust in the United Kingdom. Subscription details can be obtained by writing to 205 South Norwood Hill, London SE25 6DN England.

The aims of the magazine are:

- to encourage contact between those for whom Anabaptism is a source of inspiration and instruction.
- to provide resources for those wanting to explore the history and insights of the Anabaptist movement and similar expressions of radical christian discipleship.

Websites of interest

Website:

<http://www.prairienet.org/cpt>

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is an organization committed to

"Getting in the Way"-challenging systems of domination and exploitation as Jesus Christ did in the first century.

A project of the Mennonite Churches, church of the Brethren and Friends United Meeting, CPT has worked in Gaza, Haiti, Washington DC, Hebron, Bosnia, Chechnya, Ontario and Richmond, Virginia. In all locations, CPT responds to invitations from grassroots movements seeking to rectify injustice in nonviolent ways. We rely on the Biblical witness, the power of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of our church constituency to sustain us in the difficult work of peacemaking.

*Christian Peacemaker Teams, P. O.
Box 6508 Chicago, IL 60680-6508 Tel.
312 455-1199*

Fax. 312 432-1213

*For suggestions or comments e-mail us at
<http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/>*

Glory in the Ordinary: Family, Work and Leisure in Divine Perspective

Thursday 6 July - Saturday 8 July 2000

At School of Christian Studies
Robert Menzies College, 136 Herring
Road North Ryde

Speakers include:

Robert Banks, Mark Hutchinson,
Gordon Preece and

Drs Judy and Jack Balswick

For further details contact:

PO Box 1505 Macquarie Centre
NSW 2113

Ph 02 9936 6020

email:socs@mc.nsw.edu.au

The Anabaptist Association of Australian and New Zealand

Background to the Association

The initiative for the establishment of the Association came out of a meeting in Tasmania in May 1995 of Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds who had been influenced in a variety of ways by the Anabaptist tradition. To provide a means of building on the contacts established at the meeting the Anabaptist Network of Australia and New Zealand was formed which became the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand following its incorporation in 1998.

Purposes of the Association

The purposes of the Association are:

1. to nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.
2. to network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.
3. to provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.
4. to provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.
5. to convene conferences and gatherings which provide

opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.

6. to extend the awareness of Anabaptism in Australia and New Zealand assisting individuals, churches and groups discover and express their links with the Anabaptist tradition.
7. to provide an opportunity for affiliation for churches and groups who wish to be known in Australia and New Zealand as Anabaptists.

What is Anabaptism?

Anabaptism is a radical Christian renewal movement that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Whilst Anabaptism was a grass roots movement with diverse expressions in its early development, its enduring legacy usually has included the following:

- baptism upon profession of faith
- a view of the church in which membership is voluntary and members are accountable to the Bible and to each other
- a commitment to the way of peace and other teachings of Jesus as a rule for life
- separation of church and state worshipping congregations which create authentic community and reach out through vision and service