

# TMTC NEWSLETTER

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## Nationalization of Higher Theological Education

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by A. James Reimer  
Director

In a recent article, "Mennonites and the Church Universal," I make the statement: "The recent integration of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church on the denominational level can, in my view, be justified theologically in a way that the division of the denomination into two nations (Canada and United States) cannot be justified theologically, although there may be good pragmatic and sociological reasons for doing so. This raises the question, for instance, what theological significance 'nationality' has for Christians." (Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology*, p. 551)

It is a historical reality that Mennonite "higher" theological education is being not only nationalized but regionalized. Prior to the integration of the two conferences, the Mennonite Board of Education (MBE) of the Mennonite Church had "ownership and authority"

over Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) and Eastern Mennonite Seminary on the graduate level, and Goshen College, Hesston College and Eastern Mennonite University on the undergraduate level.

In contrast, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of the General Conference Mennonite Church did not own and have authority over schools but functioned more like a council under whose umbrella schools like Bethel College, Bluffton College and the General Conference component of AMBS interacted with each other. It played more of a coordinating role. The two different approaches reflected differences in church polity between the Mennonite Church (largely of Swiss background) and the General Conference (an amalgam of Russian Mennonite and Swiss traditions), the latter valuing autonomy to a much greater extent.

As of February 2002, these two educational agencies will be replaced with one Mennonite Educational Agency (MEA), with asymmetrical relations to the church schools in the United States only. What the parallel higher theological education agency will be in Canada remains to be determined.

The responsibility of these two organizations (MBE and HEC) to Canadian theological education was always somewhat ambiguous, although Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now part of Canadian Mennonite University) was in the past much more intrinsically con-



Phil Enns (left) speaks with Jim Reimer at a student gathering.

### TMTC Newsletter

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. . . continued on page 2

nected with North American conference structures then was, for example, Conrad Grebel College, owned and operated by the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, which had a peripheral relationship to MBE.

Most welcomed the decision of the two largest North American Mennonite bodies to integrate (Wichita '95) as the leading of the Holy Spirit. After all, is Paul's one-body-many-members metaphor (1 Corinthians 12) not directly applicable here? The acceptance of the joint Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective at the same gathering might be considered as the theological underpinning of this new union.

What, however, is one to make of the decision to divide this new united body into two nations (St. Louis '99)? How is division rather than union to be theologically justified? Or does it need to be? Biblical support can readily be marshalled for saying that the unifying power of the Holy Spirit does not erase particularity and natural differentiations (ethnic, national, sexual, linguistic, cultural, etc.) It has been argued, for instance, that the linguistic division and scattering of the peoples in the Babel story of Genesis 11 was not a curse but a blessing (the diaspora vision).

Similarly, the Acts 2 account of Pentecost is not the permanent overcoming of natural differences between people but a new understanding between diverse peoples. The unity in Christ of Galatians

3:27 has little to do with removing the biological differences between male and female, or the ethnic differences between Jew and Gentile, but refers to a higher spiritual union.

But this was not my point in the quotation with which I began this editorial. My claim was rather that the nationalization of theological education should be justified functionally, not theologically in any immediate sense. We run into difficulty when we attempt to defend such divisions biblically and theologically in an unmediated way.

Ultimately, of course, everything we do as Christians and as Christian institutions must cohere around a common theological centre (allegiance to Christ), but there are "pre-Christian" goods, like sexuality, nationality, culture, which are Christian only in a mediated sense—that is, as part of what it means to be human (for Christian and non-Christian alike). I would argue that the nationalization of the Mennonite denomination, and thereby of higher theological education, falls into this category.

There are historically two main Protestant schools of thought on the theological significance of church polity. Lutherans, following the two-kingdom teaching of Luther, in which law and gospel are clearly separated, have tended to argue that the way one governs the church (e.g., democratically or non-democratically) is not theologi-

cally relevant; the only theologically significant point is whether one is allowed to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments rightly.

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The Reformed traditions, in contrast, have given church governance (whether episcopal, presbyteral or congregational) great theological significance, borne out in the numerous divisions within the Anglican community over questions of church polity. My hunch is that Swiss Mennonites are closer to the Reformed tradition and the Russian Mennonites closer to the Lutherans on this issue.

I lean toward the latter view, as the opening quotation suggests. That is, I believe the division of the one new denomination into two nations can be justified on a number of grounds, but we should not give too much direct theological weight to it. Let me suggest three such non-directly-theological justifications: 1) it recognizes fundamental differences between Canadian and American Mennonites and the way they relate to their cultures, including the fact that Canada is a small country which has never broken its ties with the "old world" through a revolution, in contrast to the United States which is an "independent" superpower, with the consequence that Canadian Mennonites see government in a more benevolent light than do American Mennonites; 2) it enables national bodies within the Mennonite World Conference to relate to American and Canadian churches on a more equal footing; 3) it acknowledges a new reality in theological education: regionalization.

What is the nature of this new reality?



David Rogalsky (left), Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada representative to the TMTC board and vice-chair, shakes hands with John E. Toews, president of Conrad Grebel College, to symbolize the transfer of ownership from the TMTC board to Grebel. (September 2000)

On the Canadian scene, Mennonite theological education is taking place in three centres: British Columbia, where Columbia Bible College relates to the Association of Christian Theological Schools (ACTS) consortium; Manitoba, where a seminary consortium is connected with Canadian Mennonite University; and Ontario, where Conrad Grebel College and the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre are affiliated with the Toronto School of Theology.

In short, Mennonites can get their seminary degrees in Canada if they so desire, even though there is as yet no free-standing Mennonite seminary in this country. Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary remains one of only two binational institutions in the new denomination (the other is Mennonite Publishing House). At a recent meeting, the Mennonite Church Canada Executive Board decided that it will continue to consider AMBS as its seminary and will appoint four Canadian members to the twelve-member AMBS board.

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**. . .we continue to value  
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global character. . .**

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The reality of the nationalization and regionalization of higher theological education presents a unique challenge to the global and ecumenical vision of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre. On the one hand, we are now owned and administered as part of the Conrad Grebel College graduate program; we are officially identified as "a graduate teaching and research centre of Conrad Grebel College, affiliated with the Toronto School of Theology." On the other hand, we continue to value our binational and global character, reflected in the makeup of our Advisory Board and given expression in the Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network. It is my personal hope that we as a Centre can forge a middle way between the scylla of pre-Christian nationalism (and denominationalism) and the charybdis of Christian unity (and ecumenism).

*Please find it in your generous hearts to contribute financially to the ongoing work of the centre. Thank you.* ; TMTC ;



Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen (seated, right) and Ed Martin (seated, centre) visited Toronto in June, 2000, to discuss the Iranian student exchange at TMTC [see p. 4]. Legenhausen is a professor at the Imam Khomeini Institute in Qum, Iran; Martin is director of programs for central and southern Asia at Mennonite Central Committee. Also pictured are Lydia Harder (left), Jeremy Bergen (standing, left) and Jim Reimer. It was agreed that the Khomeini Institute, MCC and TMTC would sponsor a series of dialogue conferences between Muslims and Christians. The first one is tentatively planned for November, 2002 in Toronto, with a second one taking place in Iran a year later.

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## Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network

This Network consists of over 250 professors, graduate students, pastors, and others who identify themselves as "Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars." The Network maintains a database, publishes a newsletter and organizes events. Topics discussed in past newsletter include academic freedom, interreligious dialogue and whether one works self-consciously as an Anabaptist and/or Mennonite scholar.

Comments about the Network:

*"The wider church must know who the scholars are and what they have to contribute. A peer network can serve this function by maintaining a database and encouraging conversation among scholars, including those who are not connected directly to a Mennonite school."* — Lydia Harder, TMTC and Conrad Grebel College

*"I have found contact with Anabaptist/Mennonite theologians to be energizing and positively challenging, and found these colleagues interested in the input I can provide from sociology and social theory."* — Peter Blum, professor of sociology, Hillsdale College.

The Network is owned and managed by TMTC (thus by Conrad Grebel College), and co-sponsored by the Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, IN. To join, contact Jeremy Bergen at 416-978-6078 or [tmtc@chass.utoronto.ca](mailto:tmtc@chass.utoronto.ca)

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# An Intellectual Journey

by *Yousef Daneshvar*

It was on a winter day of 1997 that I was called to a meeting with the chief director of the Imam Khomeini Institute. As a student in the Seminary of Qum for about fifteen years, I had completed a masters degree in Philosophy of Religion. The meeting with the director was short but it was going to have a far-reaching impact on my life and on the life of my family. It was proposed that I continue my studies at a university in North America as part of a student exchange program between the Institute and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a name that had never reached my ears until that day. I had never considered making such an overwhelmingly huge change in the course of my life. Being away from our homeland and all relatives for a long time, living in a country with a culture totally different from our own, and above all, the extensive exposure of our children to the Western secular culture, just to mention a few reasons, made me reluctant to take on this big risk.

However, there was at least one encouraging aspect to this long and risky

journey. To a large extent, my studies had been motivated and directed by problems emerging mostly from the West. Like many others among my peers, I had come to see it as a necessity that Muslim scholars procure a profound knowledge of the West in its different aspects. I thought that any informed treatment of this complicated phenomenon on the part of Muslims hinged on this knowledge. Now, I was provided with an opportunity to serve this good cause and, this alone was significant enough to make me decide to go on this journey. Nevertheless, had I not enjoyed my wife's support and encouragement I would never have made such a bold decision.

I arrived in Toronto with my wife, our son, Mojtaba, and our daughter, Maryam, on September 18 1998. Upon passing English language courses and exam, I started my studies as a Ph.D. student of Philosophy of Religion at the Toronto School of Theology. Our children go to both Canadian and Iranian schools, which is not so easy for them. My wife spends most of her time at

home. This is quite a challenge for her since she was a university student in clinical psychology in Iran and had to quit her studies to move to Canada. As a matter of fact, our life here has been full of challenges, even though a kind of adaptation has been achieved by the constant and very generous support of our hosts, particularly Susan Harrison, the local coordinator of the exchange program here in Toronto. However, I have been enjoying my studies here despite the unexpected death of Dr. Schner [see p. xxx], my supervisor, a man of both great scholarship and high moral virtues, which was quite a loss for me.

Along with my studies I have been involved in a constructive and instructive dialogue with a wide range of Christian denominations, including Mennonites. In one sense, even my studies serve as part of the dialogue. This dialogue, together with living in a highly multicultural society, has provided me with a great opportunity to know much more about our world, humankind, the different ways human beings see the world, and the various outcomes of their quest for truth. On this side of the world I have been able to take another look at the world and its problems, and to think of some new solutions to them. My area of studies, religion versus secularism, has always been part of these meditations. I am fascinated to see how these two approaches diverge and converge on various issues and how those within a single religion, despite their significant commonalities, see the world and its problems differently due to their different views of the world, God, and man. To mention just one of many examples, I came to understand how the Christian pacifists' exclusive emphasis on peace vis-à-vis the ongoing bitter conflicts on the earth is deeply anchored in their doctrines of God, sin, and forgiveness. Whereas the Islamic perspectives on the same subjects lead to giving priority to justice; peace is highly respected as long as the cause of justice is not damaged.

It goes without saying that neither of the Christian and the Muslim sides in this exciting dialogue has convinced or has tried to convince the other of its opin-



Yousef Daneshvar (right) talks with Jim Reimer

ions. A more mutual, informed, understanding of each other, however, has obviously developed between us, or in some cases, has begun to come into existence. I could go on for hours talking about my experience of living in Toronto and being engaged in a fruitful dialogue with Christians. So let me conclude with the statement that, now, I believe, more strongly than I did at any time before, that one real hope for the agonizing problems of humanity is an honestly and fairly conducted dialogue between relig-

ions. The first voice to call me to such a dialogue was the Holy Quran that enjoined on Muslims, more than 1400 years ago:

Dispute not with the people of the book save in the fairer manner except for those of them that do wrong; and say we believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is one, and to him we have surrendered. 24:46

| TMTc |

## FROM TORONTO TO LITHUANIA

by Daryl Culp

I graduated from the Toronto School of Theology in 1998. This event capped a long period of grappling with issues in the philosophy of religion. The doctoral program at TST gave me a good foundation for teaching theology and philosophy, because it forced me to ask questions about my own faith, and to listen to those who have different ideas.

I did not have a vision of myself as an academic or a professor when I entered TST. I was interested in studying theology, but did not have a sense of personal direction. Consequently, it took me a long time to come up with a thesis topic. I had long been interested in issues surrounding the philosophy of language, and I finally decided to explore these ideas in the thoughts of a Mennonite theologian. My doctoral thesis was on Gordon Kaufman's views of religious language.

Studying at TST was invigorating for me, because of the many viewpoints expressed. I enjoyed interacting with students from other Christian perspectives. I also enjoyed taking philosophy courses at the University of Toronto, where I was challenged to "think outside the box" of the Christian tradition.

I especially enjoyed my relations with Catholics, both at St. Michael's College and Regis College. I attended mass sporadically, and have grown to appreciate the special sense inculcated by the Catholic liturgy. My thesis advi-

sor was George Schner, a Jesuit, who inspired me with his clear thinking and incisive critiques of current theological trends.

The Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre acted as a unifying place for my thinking and being. It was very important for me to struggle with others over the question "What does it mean to be a Mennonite?" I valued very much the opportunity to discuss the distinctives of Mennonite theology, as well as what we have in common with other traditions.

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### I have learned that I love to teach. . .

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After I graduated, I worked for a year as an assistant to the editor at the *Canadian Mennonite*. I found it very valuable to get a sense of the larger church, and the many ways in which it is working in local communities and as a national body.

Over my years at TST, I had been corresponding with Lithuania Christian College (LCC), exploring the possibility of a volunteer position. I even had a meeting with the president of the college, Jim Mininger, who had a stopover in Toronto one spring. In the spring of 1999, I agreed to teach philosophy for one year at this liberal arts college in the former Soviet Union. I garnered financial support from family and

friends to cover my costs. During my first year at LCC, I applied to the Science and Religion course program operated by the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences in Berkeley, California. I was awarded a grant to teach my course on "Scientific Method and Christian Faith" again in the fall of 2000. This award covered my costs here at LCC for a second year.

I have enjoyed teaching in Lithuania, because the students are very motivated (their college education is the key to their future). This country, although small, has played a fascinating role in Central European history. I find the people very reflective, and I love the local art and music. I have had the opportunity to travel to St. Petersburg, but mostly I love going back to Vilnius (the capital of Lithuania), a city that retains its historical roots without being inundated by tourists (yet).

In a small college that relies on volunteers, one ends up working in unexpected areas. When I got here, I was asked to chair the General Studies department (philosophy, history and German language at this point). I have participated in making decisions about academic affairs, and have learned a lot about administrative work.

Through this experience, I have learned that I love to teach. My students have stimulated me to think about fundamental philosophical and theological concepts. Many times, I have written short responses to their essays and journals. This semester, I am compiling a collection of their writings and mine, which illustrate the kind of interaction that I love to stimulate in the classroom.

I would encourage TMTc students to consider the possibility of teaching overseas. It is a tremendously stimulating experience, and has given me a new perspective on theological education (both my own, and that of my students. | TMTc |

**News note:** A. James Reimer will be on sabbatical from January to June, 2002, at the Centre for Theological Inquiry, Princeton Theological Seminary (proposed). During this time, Lydia Harder will serve as the director of TMTc.

## Current students

*Students who affiliate with TMTC*

**Rene Baergen**, M.A., New Testament

**Jeremy Bergen**, M.A., Theology

**Yousef Daneshvar**, Ph.D., Philosophy of Religion

**Phil Enns**, Ph.D., Philosophical Theology

**Mohammed Farimani**, Ph.D., Philosophy of Religion

**Kerry Fast**, Ph.D., Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

**Miriam Frey**, D.Min., Spiritual Direction

**Susan Harrison**, Th.D., New Testament

**Charleen Jongejan**, M.Phil.F., Institute of Christian Studies

**Jennifer Pfenniger**, Th.D., Old Testament

**Tim Reimer**, Th.D., Old Testament

**Joél Schmidt**, M.T.S., Conrad Grebel College

**Marcus Shantz**, Law, University of Toronto

**Derek Suderman**, Th.D., Old Testament

**Glen Witmer**, Th.M., Jewish Studies

*Students are at the Toronto School of Theology unless otherwise noted.*

## CONGRATULATIONS

**Anna Janzen**, Ph.D., University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology, defended her thesis in 2000: "Der Friede im lukanischen Doppelwerk vor dem Hintergrund der Pax Romana." (loose translation: "The Peace in Luke/Acts in the context of the Pax Romana.") She is currently pastoring a Mennonite church in München, Germany.

**Maurice Martin**, D.Min., McMaster Divinity College, defended his thesis in 2001: "Tradition and Experience: The Functional Theology of a Congregation at Worship (Hillcrest Mennonite Church)." He is currently working for Mennonite Church Canada.

**Brian Enns**, M.A., Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, graduated in 2000. Thesis: "A Foucauldian Approach to the Globalization Discourse." He is currently working for Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.

**Jean Hung**, M.R.E., Emmanuel College, graduated in 2001. She has served as a pastor in Mennonite congregations.

## FINDING ONE'S SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

*by Miriam Frey*

Two years ago, during the Toronto School of Theology Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) orientation, I wondered if I had misunderstood God's call. The first evening, when the director explained the program, I felt duped by God when I realized that the D.Min program was about collaborative learning. I had expected to explore my spiritual journey alone as I had done in previous studies, but was informed that I would be sharing my learning and questions with eight other students in the program. Since then I have learned to appreciate the usefulness of collaborative learning as a way to strengthen and broaden my ideas. What was initially my biggest fear, I am discovering, is the greatest asset in the D.Min program.

With the help of other D.Min students from a range of Christian denominations, I am beginning to define my ministry in the Mennonite church as a spiritual leader and teacher. Rather than pastoral duties, I prefer to work as an adult Sunday School teacher, retreat facilitator, and spiritual director. Because there is no specific ministry like this in the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada (MCEC), I started

working in my home congregation, Waterloo North Mennonite. Over the past year I have been given opportunities to serve as a spiritual teacher in Mennonite and Lutheran congregations as well as MCEC events. Whether or not I complete my D.Min degree, I know that I have found a calling in the ministry of spiritual direction.

My interest in spirituality and spiritual direction began almost twenty years ago through personal growth and silent retreats. As I gained confidence, I began to lead prayer retreats, spiritual growth workshops, and Sunday School classes in dream interpretation and spirituality types. More recently I began training as a spiritual director. For those who are not familiar with spiritual direction, it is a spiritual discipline that has been exercised in the Christian church for two thousand years. It is a one-to-one relationship between a person seeking God in daily life and a mentor or spiritual director who agrees to accompany the person on their spiritual journey. The mentor does not direct the sessions, but provides space for the true director, the Holy Spirit. It is like counseling in that the person brings events and experiences from daily life to the session, but spiritual direction is unlike counseling in that the

primary focus is attending to the relationship between the person seeking direction and God.

Spiritual direction has become the focus of my studies at TST. Now that I have completed my course work and I am approaching the thesis proposal stage of the D.Min program, I have decided to study what Mennonite lay persons who are receiving spiritual direction are seeking. Can these Mennonite lay persons articulate their spiritual needs and longings? Are they looking for spiritual depth, a safe place to explore their faith and theology, or a place where they can discern life choices? I believe Mennonite congregations and conferences can better respond to the spiritual needs of individual members if they understand what adults are seeking when they go to Catholic or other denomination's spiritual directors and retreats. I have a hunch that the Christian education and spiritual programs of the Mennonite church may need to incorporate more exploration of the inner dimensions of our faith.

I am convinced that spiritual direction is a needed spiritual discipline in the Mennonite church because it invites persons to reflect on their experience and understanding of God. As I outlined in a recent paper ("Spiritual Awareness: How Spiritual Direction Benefits the Mennonite Tradition," 2001), I believe that for many years the Mennonite tradition has focused more on the outward behavior than on the inner spiritual life. Through spiritual direction persons can attain spiritual depth "which not only leads to a deeper relationship among human persons, but also... [carries them] to the very root of all relationships--the presence of the living God" (Joseph J. Allen, *Inner Journey: Toward a Rebirth of Eastern Christian Spiritual Direction*, p.2). Spiritual direction may not be for everyone in the congregation, but persons seeking to know God can certainly profit from exploring this spiritual discipline.

It was easy for me to decide to register through Regis College because I was impressed with their course selection in the area of spirituality. Ironically enough, by the time I registered at Regis, their faculty members teaching spirituality were reduced to two professors. I was privileged to work with Margaret Bren-

nan on several occasion and, now that she is retiring, I realize the significance of having studied with this wise and generous woman. My contact with Regis College will continue to be important during my thesis writing because I have learned to know several faculty members who specialize in spiritual direction, although not at an advanced degree level. These people will offer valuable resources as I continue my studies.

I have been most grateful for the presence of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) at TST because it has allowed me to study with Mennonite professors in Toronto. Last fall, through TMTC, I studied Anabaptist Spirituality with Arnold Snyder and the experience was enriched by the class members who came from Catholic, Anglican and Mennonite traditions. I was also able to do a reading and re-

search course with Lydia Harder whom I have asked to serve as my faculty advisor on my Thesis Committee.

It is comforting to know that I will be working with a Thesis Committee consisting of my faculty advisor, a representative of my ministry base, and a representative from my D.Min class. The collaborative learning model, I realize now, will help me as I move into the next stages of the comprehensive exam, research, and thesis writing. I feel well supported by the caring and knowledgeable people around me. I am gaining confidence in my ability to state my ideas clearly as I get feedback from class members and persons from my local congregation. While the inner spiritual journey is not always easy, I have concluded that I did not misunderstand God's call. I am where I need to be and consider it a privilege to study and work with the other students in the D.Min program. | TMTC |



Marcus Shantz presents the two main legal theory perspectives—formalism and positivism—and asks which might be more amenable to Mennonite theology.

## TMTC Student Gathering

About once a month, Mennonite graduate students at the Toronto School of Theology and the University of Toronto gather to discuss issues relating to their studies. Often a student presents on a question or issue they've been working on, and a discussion follows. These gatherings are coordinated by Phil Enns. For 2000-01, the leaders and topics were:

Phil Enns - Sin  
 Discussion with Alan and Eleanor Kreider [see p. 10]  
 Jeremy Bergen - Church practices and the theological task  
 Susan Harrison - The ethics of biblical interpretation  
 Marcus Shantz - Law and Mennonite theology  
 Derek Suderman - Is (Christian) scripture disappearing?  
 Discussion with Andreas D'Souza [see p. 12]

## — Remembering Professor George Schner (1946-2000) —

*Professor George P. Schner, S.J., associate professor of systematic theology, Regis College, Toronto School of Theology, died on November 12, 2000. He taught and directed theses for several Mennonite students over the past decades and had other connections to TMTC. Phil Enns is a student of George's.*

by Phil Enns

The last time I saw George Schner was a few days before he died. He was weak and the illness he had struggled with over the previous months had clearly taken its toll on his body. But our conversation was like many other conversations we had had over the few years I knew him. He was concerned about how my studies were going and expressed regret that his illness had interrupted work we were doing together. He asked about my family and especially my daughter Katie. I teased him about his most recent project which was a book on Schleiermacher. We parted with him promising to look at some work I had given him, and my promising to get more work to him.

For two years, I was George's teaching assistant in a course on the theological significance of philosophical work from premodern to modern to postmodern times. I don't think the course material was all that unique but the way George taught it, was. On several occasions, George confessed to me that he was not an original thinker, that his gift was not to chart a new path for the church, but rather to pass on the tradition. Perhaps this should not be a surprising confession from a Jesuit, but George wasn't an ordinary Jesuit and this was reflected in how

he taught.

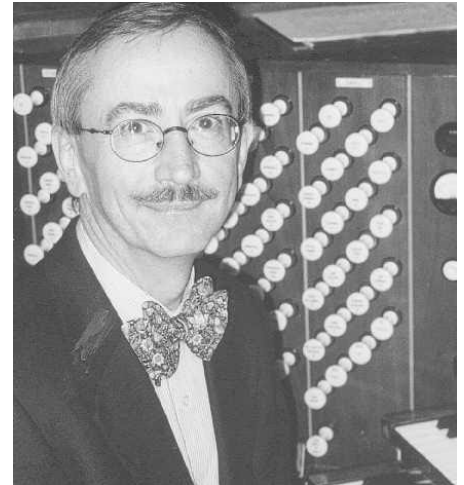
One of the first things that surprised me about George was that he had done his doctoral work at Yale, studying under Hans Frei, George Lindbeck and Louis Dupre. Perhaps it was this mix of being a Jesuit studying in a liberal Protestant university which led him to his unique pedagogical method, a method that combined a deep respect for the history of theological thought with a sensitivity to contemporary issues.

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### Again and again he would push students to listen to what the text was actually saying.

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Maybe this is why so many Mennonite students were attracted to study with him. As I already noted, George thought of himself as passing on the



those same issues. (If this sounds Hegelian, George always thought of himself as an Hegelian.) So, teaching a course on theological and philosophical thinkers was not a means of passing on information, but rather a matter of confronting who we are as Christians today. It was this conviction combining tradition and contemporary issues of faithfulness that appealed most to my Mennonite sensibilities. And clearly this appealed to many other kinds of Christians as well. While George taught at a Jesuit college, it was not unusual to find that the majority of his students were not Catholic and came from diverse backgrounds including both liberal and evangelical.

On a more idiosyncratic note, I was attracted to George's commitment to the text. Again and again he would push students to listen to what

the text was actually saying. Most classes George taught involved, at some point, working through a primary text line by line. He did this for several reasons. In some cases he felt that students had not yet learned how to read philoso-



George Schner (right) converses with Gordon Kaufman at a TMTC public forum in 1994.

tradition, but he considered this task to be a dynamic one. The tradition, and for George this tradition was firmly grounded in the Biblical text, both created the contemporary issues that faced the church and offered a resolution for



phical or theological texts and therefore it was necessary to show them. George also felt that it was not enough to talk about a thinker's work, but that one had to directly engage it. It wasn't unusual for George to stop a discussion and insist that we check for either the exact wording or phrasing of a text. This conviction sometimes went a bit far as in the case of George reading passages from the Latin writings of Ockham. He would stop at a particular word and point out how this particular Latin word was used instead of another. Of course, this was lost on virtually everyone in the class, including myself, but I couldn't help but be impressed by his commitment to the pri-

mary text. It wasn't simply that George was obsessive over details, even though he was, but that he insisted that we respect the text.

Along with being a very precise individual, George had a warm and open personality. Because my wife worked, I looked after our daughter Katie during the day. I was doing a directed reading course with George and he insisted that I should bring Katie with me and that Katie could play in his office while we worked. (It became a running joke at Regis College that Katie was their youngest doctoral student ever.) George had a number of stuffed animals at home and, for each meeting, he

would bring one for Katie to play with. I will never forget the image of George on the floor playing with my daughter and a teddy bear.

I miss our running disagreements over whether the text was actually saying anything. I miss his respect and insight into the Christian tradition which broadened my theological horizons. I miss seeing him walking around the university campus with his distinctive beret and his arms invariably full of books. I miss teasing him about Schleiermacher, a theologian who continually exasperated him, yet from whom he could never escape. I miss George. | TMTc |

## An Anabaptist Theology of Culture

A Review of Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City*. Herald Press, 2000, 352 pages, \$16.99 US, \$25.29 Cdn.

*Duane Friesen spent a sabbatical at TMTc in 1997 during which time much of the research and writing for this book was completed. Versions of material in this book were presented in TMTc classes and public forums.*

by Lydia Neufeld Harder

In this stimulating and well argued book, Duane Friesen creates the basis for an alternative cultural vision for the church in an age of multiple cultures and diverse ways of life. Using the metaphor of the church in exile, Friesen challenges Christians to find a way to "seek the peace of the city" just as Jeremiah challenged the Jewish exiles in Babylon to do this many years ago. His vision, arising out of Anabaptist-Mennonite roots, interdisciplinary and ecumenical dialogue, and practical experience attempts to speak to the daily lives of Christians as they live as artists, citizens and philosophers in our post-Christendom world.

By grounding his vision in a Trinitarian framework, Friesen is able to overcome dualisms (spirit/body, individual/collective, particular/universal) that have long plagued theological thinking. His

view of theology as a creative constructive process allows him to develop multiple motifs and metaphors which tell the story of God and the world. By naming Christ as the orienting centre of his view of God, however, he is able to form a holistic "pattern" of the divine. He therefore insists that the response from humans must be similarly holistic although developed in numerous creative ways. Thus a normative vision is formed that can help Christians discern the "good" without resorting to justifying any one definition by an appeal to an absolute authority.

Friesen is well aware that a new paradigm relating church and culture is needed in these post-modern times. He moves beyond Ernest Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr with his more fluid and complex concept of culture as well as with his embodied notion of Christ. For him the church stands in that ambiguous place between God's initiative to embody Christ in the world through the Spirit and the flawed institutional life of a particular community in history. Yet he insists that it is the establishment of an alternative community with its "focal practices" that can make the Christian church a potent force in the world. It is in intimate communities of



moral formation that clear identities are formed, boundaries are discerned and hospitality is learned. From this base he urges the church to engage the larger society with a contemporary translation of the good news.

The last three chapters of the book give practical examples of how Christians make discriminating judgments as they express the life of the Spirit through material culture, as they practice responsibility in civic life and as they interact with religious and scientific knowledge. This is possible through a process of

transcultural, analogical imagination stimulated by many conversation partners. The result is both a critical and a creative engagement with the particular North American context in which this book places itself.

Imagination, dialogue, discernment: these terms gain concreteness within the book itself. Friesen has succeeded in making discriminating judgments while at the same time stimulating our imagination and keeping the conversation with many different authors open. A response to this book cannot be passive acceptance or rejection of Friesen's ideas. Instead we are called upon to reflect on the relationship between the church that we know best—our own community of faith—and the “city” in which we dwell.

My personal response to this book began with reflections on my relationship to culture as a naive consumer of culture rather than as an active shaper of culture. My ongoing dialogue with Friesen would want to focus more profoundly on our human condition as one of brokenness and alienation arising from active inculturation by church and society. I would want to delve more deeply into the meaning of salvation, conversion and healing. How do we change from consumers to artists, citizens and philosophers? Perhaps this book has done its intended work if this conversation continues! ; TMTC ;

Both Alan and Eleanor Krieder (right) were Mennonite Board of Mission missionaries to England and served at the London Mennonite Centre. Besides publishing several books, they were professors at Oxford University.



## Conversion and Culture in Early Christianity

by Jeremy Bergen

On November 8, 2000, Alan Krieder presented a lecture on what it meant in the early centuries to be converted.

Based on accounts of individual conversions, Krieder suggested that in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, conversion entailed a change in behaviour, belief and a new sense of belonging. For example, one text suggests that a catechumen underwent a three-year process of learning to behave like other Christians, which was distinctively at odds with society's norms on wealth, power and violence. Only after a demon-

strated change in behaviour was a catechumen considered ready to “hear the gospel” and receive instruction in Christian beliefs. An experience of the Holy Spirit may have prompted the interest in learning about the faith, may have occurred in the middle of the catechumenate, or during the ritual of baptism, but to be converted necessarily entailed conforming to the to the community's norms of behaviour.

After Constantine, conversion became a “mopping-up” process in which deviant pagans were made to conform to the established Christian order. Conversion meant a change in beliefs but not usually a change in behaviour. The element of “belonging” remained to the extent that conversion to Christianity meant belonging to the empire's religion and thus to full participation in society.

Stephen Hawkes-Teeples, professor of church history at Regis College, responded to Krieder's lecture. He agreed with Krieder's analysis but asked what the church was to do when people were breaking down her doors to get in.

After the public lecture, Alan and Eleanor shared with TMTC student group their spiritual and intellectual journey from Goshen, Indiana to London, England over the past decades. In the U.K., they experienced many people from other denominations who were attracted to the theological and spiritual resources of Anabaptist faith and practice. ; TMTC ;



Stephen Hawkes-Teeples (left) and Elmer Thiessen discuss conversion in the early church.

# Anabaptist Spirituality

by Arnold Snyder

*This is a report on a course taught from September to December, 2000 at the Toronto School of Theology. Snyder is a professor of church history at Conrad Grebel College.*

This small but mighty seminar met once a week, every Monday morning, during the Fall semester, 2000. The seminar set out to explore the possible roots of Anabaptist spirituality, both in the preceding Catholic tradition and in the contemporary sixteenth century reforming context. To this end we read, analyzed, and compared Anabaptist sources in light of ancient Christian writers, such as Augustine, Meister Eckhart, and Joachim of Fiore, late medieval sources such as *The Imitation of Christ*, and *The German Theology*, and selected Reformation texts. The guiding focus for the seminar was: In what ways does Anabaptist spirituality stand, or not stand, in continuation with Roman Catholic spirituality? Likewise, in what ways does Anabaptist spirituality stand, or not stand, in continuation with Protestant spirituality?

Our class was graced by the regular presence and contribution of Sister Margaret Brennan, I.H.M, professor emerita of pastoral theology, Regis College. Her rich background and experience as a Roman Catholic religious as well as her mastery of the Catholic spiritual tradition were invaluable additions to our class. Margaret was a co-teacher of the course, to all practical purposes. She delighted us with her warm humour and enlightened us with her insights.

True to its exploratory, seminar format, teachers and students alike learned much as a result of our study together. Although the class conclusions are impossible to summarize adequately, I attempted to draw up some theses and conclusions for the last class. In answer to the focus questions that guided our study, the following points are a summary of those theses:

## — T M T C C O U R S E S —

? The shape of Anabaptist spirituality – its understanding of God's call, the process of salvation, and the Christian walk – was **fundamentally** ascetic (and in this sense, Catholic), and only **superficially** Protestant.

? Seen in the context of Reformation biblicism, the Anabaptist appropriation and reading of Scripture appears to be a heightened ascetic reading, standing in continuity with the late medieval understanding, rather than being a radical break from it. Consequently, Anabaptism is not best described as "Protestantism taken to its proper ends," but rather, it appears to be a "Protestantized Ascetic Piety."

? The radical spiritualism of the Anabaptists (which had late medieval roots) cleared the ground for radical restorationism. The Anabaptists attempted to restore the church to its pristine, New Testamental shape. One result was the formation of a "Believers' Church," in which each member had been individually called into the Body of Christ by the living Spirit of God. This development was frowned upon by Catholics and Protestants alike.

? The resulting Anabaptist communities had an ascetic, monastic shape: baptism as vow; discipline (the ban) as encouragement to growth and obedience; perseverance on the ascetic path;

a Christocentric piety of following Jesus.

? But a second result of this radical spiritualization of the Christian life was that a millennium's-worth of liturgy, ceremony, symbolic language, prayer, and ritual was now thrown away as "human invention," not truly biblical, and not necessary for a truly spiritual life.

? There is much that characterizes monastic community that is absent from Anabaptist communities such as regular, systematic prayer (the hours), systematic religious exercises (such as the affective, structured devotional engagement of the *Devotio Moderna*), and the sacramental substructure.

? In light of late medieval parallels, it appears that Anabaptist spirituality was a further development of the Western ascetic understanding of the Christian path. Augustine, Cassian, St. Benedict, Peter Waldo, St. Francis, Tauler, a Kempis, and a host of others, are also the shapers of Anabaptist spirituality.

? Martin Luther called Anabaptism a new monkery. From his perspective, the statement was a mighty insult. From other perspectives it can be taken as a great compliment, an indication of the continuation in Anabaptism of ancient and venerable Christian spiritual traditions. | TMTc |

## 2001-2002 Courses Offered in Toronto

### ? War & Peace in Christian Thought

A survey of Christian teaching on war and peace from the early Church to the present, include the 'just war' theories of Augustine, Aquinas, the Reformers and recent Catholic statements, as well as the pacifist views of Quakers, Mennonites and Brethren. Taught by A. James Reimer. Sept.–Dec., 2001, Tuesdays, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

### ? Church: Fiorenza, Moltmann and Yoder

A comparative study of the writings of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Jürgen Moltmann and John Howard Yoder on the nature of the church. Taught by Lydia Harder. Jan.-Apr., 2002, Tuesdays, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

*These courses are taught at the advanced degree level (M.T.S, M.A. or Ph.D.) as well as the basic degree level (M.Div.) If you are interested in taking a course for credit or audit, contact Jeremy Bergen at the TMTc office, 416-978-6078, tmtc@chass.utoronto.ca*

## Interfaith dialogue as reconciliation

by *Jeremy Bergen*

How are interfaith dialogue, reconciliation and justice linked?

Dr. Andreas D'Souza addressed this question on April 19, 2001 at a TMTC forum. D'Souza, a Roman Catholic and expert on Islam, is the director of the Henry Martyn Institute, an international centre for research, interfaith relations and reconciliation in Hyderabad, India. He is in Canada under the sponsorship of several church groups and the Mennonite Central Committee as a scholar-in-residence at Emmanuel College in the Toronto School of Theology. Mennonite Central Committee is a partner agency of the Martyn Institute and has been involved in its work in conflict mediation.

D'Souza began his presentation by reviewing the history of the Martyn Institute. It was founded in the 1950s to teach and interpret Islam to Christians so that "Christians may fulfill their missionary obligation to Muslims." But the nature of the "missionary obligation" has changed over time. In the beginning, it was evangelization. However, its leaders came to see a role for the Institute in active peacemaking and, as a first step, sponsored several Muslim/Christian dialogue to promote mutual understanding



Andreas D'Souza

In 1990, the Institute embraced a mandate of reconciliation—to study and understand all religions (not just Islam), to promote justice and peace, and to facilitate interfaith collaboration on specific projects. Aggressive proselytization gave way to the spirit of Luke 4 – "Good news to the poor." This mandate is still evangelical, said D'Souza, because the Good News entails peace, economic justice and the removal of enmity between groups, including religious groups.

The word "reconciliation" presented a challenge in the reconstruction of the In-

stitute's mission. It tended to have the Christian sense of restoring the brokenness caused by sin as narrated in Genesis—a view not shared by partners of other faiths. The following definition was eventually agreed upon: "In the context of existing oppression, reconciliation is a process of struggle of the people to bring together estranged persons, leading to transformed relationships and structures based on justice."

Toward this end, the Institute has been involved in transforming conflicts which are often deeply ingrained in social structures and manifest in open violence. They have also promoted understanding between faiths. For example, the Institute sponsored four Canadian women (Muslim, Hindu, First Nation, Christian) and four Indian women (Muslim, Hindu, tribal, Christian) to travel together in each other's country. From this experience, the participants expressed a "deep-down shared spirituality" that transcended differences in dogma and was based on concern for relationships, family,

and each other.

In the ensuing discussion, Jim Reimer asked D'Souza about the distinctiveness of different religions, and what about his approach is uniquely Christian. D'Souza replied that, for him, Jesus is God's definitive revelation and his model for reconciliation, but this view cannot be imposed. Other revelations are also unique though ultimately point to the same reality. Since reconciliation is a concept in all religions, in a multifaith context like India the question is how to maintain unique religious identities while working together to bring God's love and concern



D'Souza (right) with Lydia Harder

to society.

One participant asked if the image of many paths leading to the same truth doesn't undermine the integrity of humanity's quest for truth. From what perspective can we say that all paths lead to the same goal? A Muslim participant agreed that we can and ought to find common ways of talking about and working towards justice and peace, although in Islam justice must come before peace. However, we should also recognize that our understandings of God are truly different and do not necessarily converge.

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**“ . . . the question is how to maintain unique religious identities while working together to bring God's love and concern to society.”**

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One participant noted with appreciation the link between interfaith dialogue and justice. When adherents of different faiths meet to discuss their similarities and differences or to work together, they do not interact solely on the conceptual level. Issues of power imbalance and economic inequality are often present and assertions of truth in such contexts may reinforce these patterns and undermine the practices of seeking reconciliation and justice. | TMTC |