Theological Education as Mission in Late Twentieth-Century England

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In this article I examine the use of theological education in one missional context—England in the late twentieth century, where I find the education methods and models used by the Mennonite missionaries to have been both thoughtful and insightful. I begin with the post-WWII Mennonite missionary work in London and the opening of the London Mennonite Centre. I then show how the use of theological education grew as the mission matured, especially after Alan and Eleanor Kreider became the Centre directors. I contend that the theological education the missionaries offered indigenized over time, as more British teachers were incorporated and the language used became less "Mennonite" and more "Anabaptist." My hope is that this article can, by detailing one mission's example, demonstrate how theological education may be used creatively in secular missional settings.

North American Mennonite missionaries in England used lay theological education as a primary outreach method for the duration of their involvement in the country. They started with children's Bible schools in postwar London. Then in the 1980s and 1990s, North American missionaries and British Anabaptists developed lay theology courses, including "Cross-Currents" and "Workshop." Especially in the 1990s, Anabaptist theological education indigenized alongside the remainder of the English mission. As the Mennonite Board of Missions' London mission grew and matured, Anabaptist study groups, the Anabaptist Network, and other institutions were initiated and led by British leaders and conveners, while Mennonite missionaries played a supporting role. Alongside the change from North American leadership to British leadership, the use of

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the term "Mennonite" decreased, and British Christians increasingly used the word "Anabaptist" instead.

The transition to British leadership of Anabaptist-oriented educational resources fit the missionaries' strategy: they did not attempt to plant Mennonite churches and create a denomination credentialing Mennonite pastors. Instead, they adopted a "leavening" missional strategy and sought to influence British Christians and their churches with Anabaptist teachings. Although the Mennonite missionaries were careful to avoid remaking British society and churches in their own image, they did believe that Anabaptism had something unique to offer England, and so they participated in mission through engagement with lay people who were looking for creative ways to revitalize their churches' community life in a secularizing society.

Post-World War II: The London Mission Begins

The Mennonite mission in England had its beginnings in the shadow of World War II. When German troops surrendered on V-E Day in May 1945, rebuilding efforts began immediately since many of the continent's cities had sustained significant damage. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the relief and development organization of nearly all North American Mennonite churches, was among those who responded. Within months of the war's end, the organization sent relief workers in droves to European cities, alongside aid packages in the form of food, clothing, and rebuilding supplies.

It was a pivotal moment for Mennonite mission agencies in Europe as well. Not only were Mennonite churches in Europe finally safe again but countries that had been closed to missionaries for decades were asking for aid and personnel to be sent. And so as MCC was responding with short-term relief, Mennonite mission agencies were taking notice. The Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (Mennonite Board of Missions, or MBM, after 1971) stated in its 1945 report: "Whereas, the war in Europe has come to an end, we recommend . . . that we utilize the potentialities of both men and money in the hearty support of the post-war plans of expansion which our Mission Board has outlined in meeting the challenge of a needy world."[1] And indeed, in some European countries at least, Mennonite relief workers would give way to long-term missionaries as European recovery progressed.

London was among the European cities that MCC sent workers to in 1945. Those workers joined other Mennonites who had been in the city throughout the war. Among the new arrivals were John Coffman and Eileen Pell. Both were Canadian and in their thirties, and amid the air raids and clothing distributions,

1 "Report of the Thirty-Ninth Annual Meeting of Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities," 1945.

they fell in love. They soon married, and, although they moved back to Canada at the end of the war, they later returned to the city where they had met and served together, but this time they went as part of a permanent initiative. MBM had decided that London would be one of the bases for its new, long-term work in Europe, and the Coffmans were invited to join the team.[2] Mennonite mission to England had begun.

In 1948 MBM proposed that when "suitable personnel become available"[3] the organization would open a Mennonite Gospel Center in London. This was not an unusual mission strategy for the time; the Board of Missions was employing the same method in other strategic cities on the continent where relief and aid had opened the doors to a long-term work, including Brussels and Paris. But it was not until 1953 that another couple—Quintus and Miriam Leatherman—agreed to move to London, and the search for a building began in earnest. Among the purposes of the proposed center was "to conduct a witness of Christian teaching in England" and "to distribute information and literature regarding Mennonite faith and way of life."[4]

A year later, MBM settled on 14 Shepherd's Hill, a large residential structure in the Highgate neighborhood of North London, and purchased the property. As providence would have it, the new Gospel Center was only a few doors down from the property from which John Coffman had distributed clothing more than a decade earlier. The Leathermans moved into the building, and a new era of Anabaptist witness in England began.

Early Education in the London Mission

From the beginning of the London mission, Bible education was used as an evangelistic tool. Within a few months of the Leathermans' arrival in London, Miriam and her two daughters assisted with the first Bible school at the Finsbury Mission, where John Coffman was serving as superintendent. Eileen, too, was a teacher at the inaugural class, and two visiting Mennonite girls from the United States served as teacher's aides. A month later, the Coffmans and Leathermans repeated the Bible School, this time at the Kentish Town Free Gospel Hall. The response, Quintus wrote, was good at both locations.[5] One report noted that

2 The Coffmans would remain in London for the rest of their lives. Eileen blessed the London Mennonite Centre with her green thumb, and John was fond of taking Centre visitors on his "Anabaptist Walk" around the city. A profile of John during WWII can be found at https://mcc.org/centennial/100-stories/name-christ.

3 Forty-Third Annual Meeting: Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, "50th Anniversary of Foreign Missions," 1949.

4 Forty-Third Annual Meeting.

5 Quintus Leatherman, "Witnessing Opportunities Grow in London," *The Power of the Gospel in a Changing World* (Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, June 17, 1954).

"two girls accepted Christ as their personal Saviour."[6] The Mennonite teachers hoped that the children who attended the schools would introduce their parents to the gospel as well.

Summer Bible schools, Sunday schools, and other forms of Bible education continued throughout the next two decades. In 1955, in coordination with the Coffmans and Leathermans, MBM purchased the Kentish Town Free Gospel Hall, and the missionaries expanded their Bible study offerings to include young adults. John Coffman recruited students from the nearby London Bible College—a new evangelical school—to teach some of the classes, an arrangement that seemed to work well for all involved. Short-term Mennonite volunteers from North America continued to arrive each summer to assist at the annual Bible schools, and, at both Finsbury Mission and Kentish Town (where the Coffmans now lived), interest and participation continued to grow through the 1950s and into the 1960s. No adult programs were offered beyond regular Bible studies hosted by the Leathermans at the Centre.

While this early missionary activity may not properly be called "theological education," a foundation of Mennonite presence and Bible education was being laid in London, and it would soon be built upon.

Speaking Theologically

Mennonite missionaries in England first began to use theological education in their mission efforts in the 1970s and '80s. In 1972, Alan and Eleanor Kreider answered a call from MBM to move to London and become the new directors of 14 Shepherd's Hill, which was by now called the London Mennonite Centre.

It is difficult to imagine anyone better suited to the unique requirements of the London assignment. Both Alan and Eleanor had deep roots in the Goshen-Elkhart region of Indiana, where North American Mennonites had settled in the 1820s. As Eleanor described it, their families carried embodied Anabaptist Mennonite "habitus."[7] The mandate to missions ran deep in both of their lineages. Alan's father, Carl, was a longtime professor of economics at Goshen College and was very involved in the Mennonite mission fervor of the 1940s and '50s. He also chaired MBM's Overseas Missions Committee in the 1970s, at the time Alan and Eleanor were called to England.[8] Eleanor, too, was from a missional family. Her parents, J. D. and Minnie Graber, had served in India as

6 Leatherman, "Witnessing Opportunities Grow in London."

7 Eleanor Kreider, "How We Speak Together" (unpublished, 2000).

8 Carl, while a Goshen student in the 1930s, was recruited by Harold Bender to return as a professor after graduate studies. As professor and dean, he was a crucial part of Goshen College's mid-century renaissance. His dual concern for academics and mission reflected the nature of many of the Mennonite Church's scholars during this era.

MBM missionaries for seventeen years, and Eleanor was born there. After their return to the states, J. D. served as the general secretary of MBM for many years, where he was influential in rousing a missionary spirit in Mennonite churches across the country with the phrase "Every church a mission outpost."[9] Both Alan and Eleanor lived and breathed the Christian mission, and their unique blend of zeal and kindness made them a great fit for the London Mennonite Centre.

Alan and Eleanor were appropriate choices for another reason as well—they thought theologically about the Christian life, and they were skilled teachers. Curiously, beyond their church and family formation, neither was theologically trained. Both had graduated from the local Mennonite institution, Goshen College—Eleanor with a degree in music and Alan with a history degree. Both then received advanced degrees in their fields and returned to teach at Goshen College in the years before moving to London. Though they had no formal theological training, they were passionate about theological education, and they believed that Anabaptists had something to offer the larger body of Christ. Their unique giftings and passion for Anabaptist values and practices would be called upon frequently during their thirty years in England.

In the beginning, the opportunities for educating theologically came through speaking engagements. The requests began to come, mostly for Alan, soon after the Kreiders moved across the pond. The London Mennonites' connection with the London Bible College now developed further, and Alan was asked to speak in the college's Reformation classes regularly. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, an evangelical university outreach, heard about the Mennonites and asked Alan to speak on "The Christian and Revolution" for an upcoming gathering of British youth. When Alan suggested that he speak on pacifism instead, the organizers declined and explained that they considered the topic largely irrelevant. Alan, not about to turn down the invitation to share his Anabaptist perspectives, agreed to speak on revolution instead.

The organizers' stance embodied British evangelicalism at the end of the 1960s. Couched mostly within the "low church" portion of the Anglican faith, the evangelical movement had, by the 1960s, lost much of the spirit of social change that the early abolitionist William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect had given it in its beginnings. The British historian David Bebbington would state in 1989 that evangelicals were marked by four attributes: conversionism, activism,

9 "Graber, Joseph Daniel (1900–1978)," Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, accessed October 28, 2022, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Graber,_Joseph_Daniel_(1900-1978). As Secretary of Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, J. D. was an important force behind much of the mission outreach of the Mennonite Church in the mid-twentieth century.

biblicism, and crucicentrism[10] But at the genesis of the 1970s, though three of the four attributes were strong themes among British evangelicals, "activism" rolled in as a distant fourth. Alan lamented, "The evangelicals aren't interested in pacifism. Their interest in social issues of any sort is in its infancy."[11]

A long-time distinction of British evangelicals was that, unlike their North American counterparts, they did not adhere strictly to the political right in Britain. Now, Alan worried, that too was beginning to change, and the tension between the social and the political factions of the evangelical movement threatened his ability to gain a hearing for a "radical Christian" perspective on social issues. "The [London Bible] College is much worried by criticism from the evangelical right,"[12] he reported. If he were forthright with his Mennonite beliefs on nonviolence, would he be shunned altogether? Yet, the evangelicals were, at this point, among the few Christians willing to give him a hearing, and so when the speaking requests came he usually accepted.

Throughout the 1970s, Alan continued to speak on theological matters when asked. The speaking requests, he found, came mainly from Christian organizations rather than churches. London pastors—whatever their personal beliefs about war, nonviolence, and social issues—could hardly afford to incite their flocks unnecessarily by way of the local Mennonite scholar. In those early years, the Quakers seemed the only British Christians to whom the idea of pacifism was not unthinkable. But as time went on, Alan sensed an increasing openness to his radical theology. He became involved with the Shaftesbury Project on Christian Involvement in Society and joined its "War, Violence, and Revolution" study group. There, he was surprised to find he was not as alone in his views as he had supposed. "I continually am amazed to find out how many quiet pacifists there are among evangelicals," he exclaimed. "We must organize!"[13]

And organize they increasingly did. A new generation of young evangelicals was increasingly disquieted by social concerns like inequality, war, and poverty, and open to radical Christian perspectives that tried seriously to address those needs. Evangelical Peacemakers formed, with Alan as a founding member. And increasingly he had an audience for the issues *he* wanted to speak about, including pacifism.

In the early 1980s, Alan and the London Mennonite Centre received two speaking engagements that greatly increased the Mennonites' reception among

10 David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, UK: Routledge, 1989), 2–3.

11 Alan Kreider, "Alan Kreider to Wilbert Shenk," June 14, 1978, Mennonite Board of Missions Overseas Ministries Records, 1975–79, Mennonite Church USA.

12 Alan Kreider, "Letter to Wilbert Shenk, M.B.M.," June 29, 1977, Mennonite Board of Missions Overseas Ministries Records, 1975–79, Mennonite Church USA.

13 Kreider, "Letter to Wilbert Shenk."

British Christians. First came an invitation from Greenbelt, an evangelical Christian music festival held outside of London. Begun in 1974, the festival was near its heyday by this time, drawing crowds of about fifteen thousand every year. For a fringe Anabaptist group, this would be an unprecedented audience, and it was a prospect that excited Alan and MBM greatly. Even more exciting was the topic they were asked to speak on: "Christian Attitudes to War." Alan, Eleanor, and other Centre staff worked hard to prepare a multimedia presentation that would befit the youthful setting. Would the youth, they wondered, really be interested in what *Mennonites* had to say?

The other speaking engagement that opened doors for the Mennonites was of a very different nature. In 1982, Alan was asked to debate at the annual London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity on the topic of the arms race. Although the lectures were begun in the same year as Greenbelt, the two settings could scarcely have been more different. Designed to "stimulate Christian thinking on some of the burning issues of the day,"[14] these talks were the brainchild of John Stott—longtime leader of All Souls, the Anglican church at the center of the evangelical movement in London. In one sense, the lecture series represented intellectually the growing wing of British evangelicalism that was committed to engaging social issues. In another sense, however, the setting was a strange one for a Mennonite because John Stott, more than perhaps any other figure, represented the intellectual and spiritual center of the evangelical movement, and not its youthful fringe. Although he had been a pacifist in his early ministry, he now held avowedly to a "just war"[15] position on the issue of violence. And Alan's debate partner? A national military figure, Sir Neil Cameron, the recently retired head of the British Armed Forces. Was Alan being invited as a diversion? Would his peace position be dissected by experts on the Mennonites' most public stage yet? Alan accepted anyway and began to prepare in earnest.

Both events went off satisfactorily. At Greenbelt, when the day of the presentation came, much to the surprise of Alan, Eleanor, and the other Mennonites in attendance, the tent was packed. Around fifteen hundred people attended the two-hour show, and Alan and other presenters proffered unapologetically the Anabaptist case for peace. Even more importantly, Alan estimated that about fifty attendees stayed behind to discuss things further with the presenters. "We may be witnessing the painful birth of a scrawny but living Evangelical peace

14 John Stott: London Lecture website, "About Us," accessed November 3, 2022, https://www.johnstottlondonlecture.org.uk/about.

15 "Just war theory" is a Christian ethical framework that attempts to discern when it is (or is not) morally permissible to go to war. Born from the thought of Catholic theologians like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the theory attempts to chart an ethically justifiable path for Christians to fight on behalf of their country so long as the conditions meet certain moral criteria.

movement," Alan reflected afterward. "Praise the Lord."[16] And at the London Lectures, on the final night of the prestigious week-long event, Alan and Sir Cameron went head-to-head. Although Cameron presented a logical case for the need for military intervention, Alan believed that his own Anabaptist case for a theology of peace came across well too. While he felt he could have spoken more clearly, he was happy not to have misrepresented his theological convictions. The Mennonites were getting an audience, and peace was getting a chance among at least some evangelical Christians in Britain.

After this, speaking requests came to the London Mennonite Centre thick and fast. The combination of the Greenbelt presentation and the arms debate at the London Lectures solidified the perception of Anabaptist theology across much of British evangelicalism, and the 1982 Falklands War seemed to increase young evangelicals' desire for a theology of peace in the church. Alan continued to speak on the Bible and theology at Christian conferences and organizational gatherings across England, but increasingly he spoke at churches too. By now, "England's best-known evangelical pacifist"[17] could speak freely, and his talks on peace, nonviolence, and radical discipleship to Jesus were welcomed in a new way.

Theological Teaching Programs

The mid-1980s marked a distinct shift in the delivery of Anabaptist theological education in England. Enabled by the growing openness to radical theological stances in the evangelical church as well as the flurry of speaking requests coming to the Centre, Mennonites and Anabaptists founded two teaching programs for theological training: "Cross-Currents" and "Workshop." Neither program was explicitly Mennonite or Anabaptist, yet both embraced the radical themes of peace, community, and discipleship to Jesus, at a time when such themes were controversial or rare. Both were intended for lay Christians rather than academics, and both placed an emphasis on everyday faithfulness, on theological ideas applied to the Christian life. Through these programs, the Mennonite and Anabaptist influence in the wider British church increased sizably.

In 1986, the staff of the London Mennonite Centre formed their very first training program—"Cross-Currents." The name was an apt one for the Mennonites and represented Alan and Eleanor's hope that even as they themselves were learning from the English church traditions surrounding them so the British church might have something to learn from Anabaptists.

16 Alan Kreider, "Alan Kreider to Wilbert Shenk," August 17, 1980, Mennonite Board of Missions Overseas Ministries Records, 1980–84, Mennonite Church USA.

17 Mennonite Board of Missions, "Kreiders Seek to Bring Anabaptist Vision to England," October 3, 1984.

The idea for a teaching program had been brewing for a year or two. Baptists and evangelical Anglicans were finding the Centre with more frequency, and the Mennonite ideas it embodied were increasingly welcomed among British Christians. One evangelical leader wrote to the Kreiders: "It seems to me that the Mennonite tradition has come of age. . . . For centuries the evangelicals have said the Mennonite tradition would not work. But as our society is growing ever more fragile and disturbed, simplicity, community, and peacemaking are becoming lively concerns for all."[18] By now, Alan was receiving more speaking requests than he could accept, and a question began to form: What if, instead of traveling to churches and conferences, they created a weekend teaching program and invited interested Christians to learn about Anabaptist theology on their own terms?

The theological task of Cross-Currents was to present an integrative view of radical Christian discipleship. Alan and Eleanor worked on the goals together: "to represent Anabaptist/Mennonite perspectives in conversation with Christians of other traditions" and "to foster Christian thinking and acting at the grassroots level."[19] The program would be flexible in its approach, they decided, and more concerned with asking questions about what it meant to follow Jesus than with giving the "right" answers. It would be an immersive learning experience, and participants would worship, pray, and eat together, in addition to attending lectures. The Centre would not try to become accredited; this would not be an academic environment but a residential one. Cross-Currents, they hoped, would be the kind of theology program where lay Christians of any denominational background could ask difficult questions about faith and life.

The beginning of Cross-Currents also marked an indigenizing moment in the Centre's theological training. Up to this point, Alan had been the primary face of the Mennonite presence in England, and it was he who traveled far and often to speak and teach. But, he and Eleanor felt, this need not continue to be so. By this time, the membership of the Centre's Mennonite Fellowship had grown larger, and they could no longer meet in the building's fifty-seat chapel. The Centre itself was now a live-in community for a number of the church members, some of whom had strong Anabaptist convictions and also theological training. Why couldn't they teach too?

For the first course offering, Alan and Eleanor decided, they would ask Chris Marshall—a PhD student in theology who lived at the Centre—to teach alongside them. Based on Chris's thesis material, they called the course "Faith and False Faith in a Time of Crisis" and described it as a "combined Bible study in the Gospel

18 Alan Kreider, "London Mennonite Centre: CrossCurrents Programme—Draft IV," June 23, 1984, Mennonite Board of Missions Overseas Ministries Records, 1980–84, Mennonite Church USA.

19 Kreider, "London Mennonite Centre: CrossCurrents Programme."

of Mark, worship, and application to the contemporary world."[20] Together with the Centre staff, they ran the course on three different weekends—one in Leeds, one in Belfast, and the final one at home in the London Mennonite Centre. The final weekend was, for the Kreiders, the most moving. At the end of the closing worship, a hushed silence fell upon the small crowd of participants, and not a single person moved; no one was ready to break the atmosphere of spiritual awe. One participant described how she "came into a place of peace and submission to Christ and met Jesus in a new and powerful way."[21] The responses encouraged the Kreiders, and they began to plan in earnest for the next course.

"Social Holiness" was the next weekend offering, and this time Alan and Eleanor taught alongside David Nussbaum, a British theology student and member of the Mennonite Fellowship. After that came courses on justice, worship, the early church, conflict management, and many other theological topics. The Centre staff continued to run several Cross-Currents courses every year throughout the next few decades, and the program became a staple of the London Mennonite Centre's witness efforts. Alan and Eleanor usually taught, often alongside other members of the church (which had become Wood Green Mennonite Fellowship by then). There continued to be, Alan noted, a felt sense of God's presence and a sense of expectancy among the diverse groups of Cross-Currents participants.[22]

After the Kreiders moved to Manchester in 1991, the teaching program continued under the leadership of Nelson Kraybill, the new Programme Director at the Centre, and the staff continued to choose theological topics based on the research and interests of the teachers within the local fellowship. The program remained important to the witness of the London Mennonite Centre well into the twenty-first century. And the ongoing use of British teachers—alongside North American Mennonite missionaries—continued the indigenization of the Mennonite mission to its English setting.

Cross-Currents was not the first Anabaptist theology teaching program in England, however; "Workshop" was. The course was the contrivance of Noel Moules, who, like Alan and Eleanor, was the son of missionary parents. Also like Eleanor, Noel was born in India, but he grew up in English boarding schools. While attending a theological college in Devon in the 1970s, he became involved in the charismatic bloc of the evangelical church, of which the Southwest of England was a hotbed at the time. Years later, after marrying and moving north to

20 Alan Kreider, "Alan Kreider to Blanche Sell, MBM," June 27, 1985, MBM Global Ministries Division, 1985–1990, Mennonite Church USA.

21 Alan Kreider, "Alan Kreider to Blanche Sell, MBM," January 6, 1986, MBM Global Ministries Division, 1985–1990, Mennonite Church USA.

22 Alan Kreider, "From Mennonite to Anabaptist: Mennonite Witness in England since 1974," in *History and Mission in Europe—Continuing the Conversation*, Mission Studies (Herald, 2011), 246.

Sunderland to take a job as a schoolteacher, Noel became involved with Teamwork, a network of about fifty churches that attempted to think in new ways about faith and life. No two of the network's churches were alike. Many were Baptist, some were house churches. Most were excited about the gifts of the Spirit, and all were trying in their own way to live out the radical teachings of Jesus. It was from this womb that Workshop was born.[23]

The fledgling network desperately needed theological education, Noel saw. His own theological training background was a rarity among the church members, many of whom had neither the time nor the means to attend an accredited Bible college. What if the church offered a lay theological training program, he wondered? Since it would be catered to people with full-time jobs, could weekend courses be offered, maybe at a few different locations around the country? It was a plan strangely like the one that birthed Cross-Currents a few years later, without any connection between the programs. There was simply, in both cases, a desire for people to learn to live out the teachings of Jesus and to be trained in the theology of the Christian life.

From the very beginning it was, in Noel's words, "like throwing a match on petrol."[24] Noel served as Workshop's primary teacher from the program's onset, and his passion for "shalom" and the kingdom of God proved deeply winsome to all who came. To his great surprise, word of the program spread rapidly, and, within a few years, hundreds were showing up to many of the weekend classes.

For the next thirty years, Noel, alongside other teachers, ran Workshop all over the United Kingdom. All in all, tens of thousands turned out for its weekend offerings. Unlike the Cross-Currents courses, it was a widespread phenomenon in the British church. But like Cross-Currents, Workshop taught practical theology, from Noel's deep belief that Christian theology must be about the Christian life. As with Cross-Currents, Workshop was filled with worship, prayer, and deep theological interaction between participants. It too emphasized the importance and power of life around the table, and Noel insisted that "once you've got food in front of you, things can happen."[25] Each weekend ended with a feast that Noel had dubbed the "peacemeal." Workshop, in true Anabaptist fashion, was about making the teachings of Jesus available to a wide Christian audience and inviting people to live accordingly.

But was Workshop Anabaptist? Not explicitly, no. Noel was introduced to Anabaptism as a historical movement during his theology training, but he did not, by his own admittance, know that it was a living tradition. Yet the new training program was, in his own words, "Anabaptist before I even knew there

23 Workshop no longer holds teaching weekends, but its teachings have been archived online through present-day.

24 Noel Moules, Interview by David Glick, September 22, 2022.

25 Moules, Interview.

were Anabaptists alive!"[26] Nonresistance, discipleship, and community were themes throughout the program's teachings, and were all encapsulated under Noel's "shalom vision."[27] The centrality of Jesus's teachings permeated the coursework, including a distinct emphasis on peace. When Alan and Noel finally met some years later, Alan remarked on Noel's inner faith and fire and reported him to be "on the Anabaptist wavelength."[28] And through meeting Alan and other Mennonites, Noel began to identify as Anabaptist, even while he maintained that, though he hadn't known it, he had been one all along. Workshop was, as Noel Moule was, thoroughly Anabaptist.

By this time, the gradual terminological switch from "Mennonite" to "Anabaptist" within the movement was well underway.[29] In many ways, as Alan had realized, this change was a crucial element of the mission's indigenization to its British setting.[30] Institutions founded by the North American missionaries—like the London Mennonite Centre and the Wood Green Mennonite Church—retained their Mennonite identity throughout their respective lifetimes, and many of Wood Green's British members referred to themselves happily as "Mennonite." Yet many others, while intrigued by the values and stories of historic Anabaptists, did not feel any particular affinity to the Mennonite tradition. And so, as indigenous British who were influenced by Anabaptism began and facilitated their own initiatives, "Anabaptist" increasingly became the common moniker within the small movement.[31]

Workshop and Cross-Currents reflected the shift toward theological education programs in the Mennonite (now Anabaptist) mission in England. As time went on, there was increasing cross-coordination between the programs, and Alan and

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26 Moules, Interview.

27 Shalom, the Hebrew word often translated "peace" or "wholeness," embodies, for Noel, the kingdom of God. As such, topics like justice, forgiveness, and salvation are all elements of shalom. Noel is a self-proclaimed "shalom activist."

28 Alan Kreider, "Triennial Report, May–August 1992," April 24, 1992, Mennonite Mission Network Global Ministries (Overseas) Files, 1990–1995, Mennonite Church USA.

29 Walter Sawatsky, a Mennonite historian, has written on the use of "Anabaptist" and "Mennonite" in missional settings, most particularly in "Centers for Historical and Mission Studies in Anabaptist World," *Mission Focus*, Annual Review, 19, no. 2011 (n.d.): 208–23.

30 Kreider, "From Mennonite to Anabaptist." Alan uses the gradual switch from "Mennonite" to "Anabaptist" to tell the story of the Mennonite mission in London, including his and Eleanor's involvement in it.

31 One example of this is the birth of the Anabaptist Network. When its founders were deliberating over what to name the new network, "Mennonite" fell out of the running quickly given that British Christians tended to associate the name with horses-and-buggies and plain bonnets. Although "Radical Reformation Network" was considered, they settled on "Anabaptist." See Stuart Murray-Williams, Interview by David Glick, May 31, 2022.

Eleanor would sometimes teach during a Workshop weekend, as Noel would for Cross-Currents. Neither program contained explicit Anabaptist theology, although Cross-Currents' formal connection to the London Mennonite Centre left little doubt as to which theological tradition it most drew from. Rather, the teachers relied on biblical themes that were dear to historical Anabaptists and modern-day Mennonites: the kingdom of God, peace, nonviolence, radical discipleship, community, justice. With Cross-Currents, British Mennonites first engaged in formal theological education alongside North American Mennonite missionaries. In Workshop, an indigenous Anabaptist teaching program was born from English initiative alone. And so each, in its own way, marked an important moment in the indigenization of the Mennonite mission in England.

"Cross-Pollination" in the British Mission

The term "indigenization" describes adequately the way MBM's London mission grew and morphed in the late twentieth century, including the rise of British leaders, the shift in terminology, and the intention shown by North American Mennonite missionaries in empowering locals. But the term is inadequate to capture another fact about the relationship of the missionaries to their British setting and counterparts—that they received as much as they gave. In their interactions with the British church and culture, the missionaries were students as well as teachers. The Kreiders, especially, were deeply shaped by their time in England. From their Anglican friends they learned the power of liturgy and praying the Daily Office. British evangelicals showed them how to study the Scriptures with confidence, and charismatics taught them to be "expectant in prayer and passionate in worship."[32] These elements of British Christianity enriched not only the Kreiders' personal lives but also their teaching ministry.

Such "cross-pollination" between North American missionaries and British Christians happened in various ways. As British Anabaptists were grateful for the Mennonite witness in London, so the visiting Mennonites were often eager to learn from the British church. MBM administrators desired to use their resources to foment Anabaptist ideas in England, but they viewed their organization's presence in England with another purpose too: they wanted their missionaries to learn from the British church how to be faithfully Christian in a secularizing society, and then to impart those attributes to the North American Mennonite church upon their return.[33] Such was the relationship between North American missionaries and the British Christians they interacted with. Mennonite

32 Eleanor Kreider, "Widening Horizon: Our Life as Missionaries in England," talk given February 11, 2013, Mission Peace Colloquium, AMBS, Elkhart, Indiana.

33 David Nussbaum, Interview by David Glick, September 9, 2022. Nussbaum recalls this from a conversation with Larry Miller, a senior administrator at MBM.

missionaries were students of the British church, and the pollination between the two groups was often reciprocal.

Theological Education after Mission

In 1992, a few British Anabaptist leaders, including Stuart Murray, founded the "Anabaptist Network" in the United Kingdom.[34] The network's beginning marked not only another progression in the indigenization of the Anabaptist movement in England but also a shift in the theological education that Mennonites and Anabaptists offered. Stuart's background as an urban church planter influenced the new network's shape, and missional themes and the gospel of Jesus remained central within the movement. Yet Stuart was also a professional academic, as were an increasing number of British Christians who were finding the Centre and the Anabaptist community in England.

Anabaptist ideas, some perhaps influenced by Alan's widespread teaching in the 1970s and '80s, now began to take form slowly within British Christian academia. From its beginning, the new Network included two particularly academic features: an annual Anabaptist Theological Forum and a journal publication, *Anabaptism Today*. Two years later, in 1994, Spurgeon's College, a Baptist school in South London, introduced a master's program in Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, and Bristol Baptist College hired a lecturer who belonged to the Anabaptist Network. The academic turn was perhaps an inevitable one, and yet, for a tradition with few professional theologians in its nearly five-hundred-year history, a bit of unease accompanied this development. It did, however, represent yet another moment of indigenization for Anabaptist education in England.

Not all of the new Anabaptist Network initiatives were academic ones. From its beginning, the new institution included a vision for a network of Anabaptist study groups. The concept was simple: in locales where a few (or more) Christians were interested in the Anabaptist tradition, they could form a study group and explore Anabaptist history and values together. Such groups were not an entirely new conception. A Radical Reformation study group had met in London since 1987, and Stuart Murray was one of its members. It was from this group that the idea for an Anabaptist Network was born, and its founding members encouraged others around the British Isles to do something similar in their own context.

Within a year, six groups had formed—in London, Bristol, the Midlands, Manchester, and even one in Northern Ireland. The gatherings represented wonderful diversity; the members of one group read about Anabaptist views on economics, while another group explored the history of the Lollards in England. Those who gathered in Manchester sang Anabaptist hymns and "[ate] marvelous

34 "Anabaptist Mennonite Network," https://amnetwork.uk/.

scones."[35] As with Cross-Currents and Workshop, a meal nearly always took center stage at the gatherings.[36] These study groups represented an important "lay theology" component within the Anabaptist Network and made the study of the Anabaptist tradition accessible to all.

In 2010, the trust overseeing the London Mennonite Centre closed its doors and sold the Shepherd's Hill property, ending an era of Mennonite mission, education, and hospitality. A British Anabaptist witness continues, however. The Anabaptist Network remains, as do its study groups and annual Anabaptist Theological Forum. *Anabaptism Today*, revived as an online-only journal, still releases three issues a year and, like the rest of the Network, is led largely by British Anabaptists. Academic theological training, too, has moved online, and Bristol Baptist College offers master's and doctoral degrees in Anabaptist Studies to students from anywhere in the world.[37]

These programs are all led and facilitated by British leaders, and, as such, represent an exciting indigenous continuation of the education programs once offered by Mennonite missionaries.

35 "Anabaptist Network News," *Anabaptism Today*, no. 3 (June 1993): 25.

36 Andrew Francis, a member of the Anabaptist Network, has written on the importance of food in Christian discipleship. See his essay on its use in the Anabaptist movement in England: https://www.anabaptistwitness.org/journal_entry/food-in-the-contemporary-uk-anabaptist-movement/.

37 Online education and its advancements in the Covid and post-Covid era are exciting developments for British Anabaptists, as they are for everyone. Yet, the question arises: If the history of Anabaptist theological education is one of theology that takes form in the Christian life, can such an education transfer to an online experience? Surely, practically speaking, there can be no substitute for table fellowship and for learning in community together, in the embodied presence of living, breathing Christian brothers and sisters. Can online theological education be truly "Anabaptist"? The next generation of Anabaptist missionaries and educators will certainly be faced with this question.