

## FOREWORD

**T**his is, in Ron Dart's oft-used expression, a trenchant, at times poignant, "plough-to-soil" book.

In the early 1980s, as part of completing a Master's of Theological Studies degree at Regent College, University of British Columbia, I focussed my Church History studies on the pre-Constantinian Church, and on 16<sup>th</sup>-century Anabaptism—much taken then by that Tradition. (As it turned out, Ron Dart was also doing a master's degree then at Regent—though we barely knew each other at the time. Ron has since become a dear friend.) I had first come across the Anabaptist Peace Tradition in January 1975 through John Howard Yoder's classic book: *The Politics of Jesus*. That Yoder tragically betrayed that position profoundly through any number of sexual assaults against women is devastating to his own theological peace witness, and is a sobering cautionary tale for all.<sup>1</sup>

That the Anabaptists were not the lead peacemakers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is part of the burden of this book. Erasmus and the English Reformers were without doubt, as you will see in this volume, the lead writers and performers of Peace in that century. Even more: by the very participation of Anabaptists in breaking with the Roman Catholic Church, they engaged in what Ron Dart many times has written about—*the sowing of the DNA of Schism in the Church Politic*. And Schism has been one hallmark of the Protestant Reformation ever since.

In fact, "*The Reformation*" to refer to Protestantism's inception in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in light of this volume, is a misnomer. "*The Great Schism*" is perhaps more apt, one that led to many Church schisms since, and to our incredibly fragmented Western world in many respects...<sup>2</sup>

I no longer these days read Yoder. And I have difficulty with a book like Palmer Becker's *Anabaptist Essentials* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2017), which fails even to mention Erasmus and the English Reformers in his overview of Church History.

In light of this volume's discussing the "Radical Reformation" arm of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformation (Anabaptists), modern-day Anabaptists/Mennonites can do perhaps no better than pause and consider this gentle corrective.

That said, the final Appendix book review of *From Suffering to Solidarity: The Historic Seeds of Mennonite Interreligious, Interethnic, and International Peacebuilding*, (Foreword by Marc Gopin, edited by Andrew Klager, Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015), highlights "the best of the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite peacebuilding way." And for that "way" at its best, one in which I participated many years through the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and now through a provincial arm, one can indeed be profoundly grateful.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see this post that gives further insight, including some outstanding resources about "The Anabaptist Vision": ["Prison, Sexual Assault, and Editing John Howard Yoder: One Man's Story," by Andy Alexis-Baker 12-14-2017.](#)

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent study, see this book review by Ron: [Fatal Discord: Erasmus, Luther and the Fight for the Western Mind](#) by noted author [Michael Massing](#).

So read, digest, then ponder wistfully as Ron briefly does, just what kind of a Western world we might have today, had Erasmus been broadly heeded conjointly with the English Reformers. And with that, we may further ponder where we all go our continued peacemaking ways from here *vis à vis* the Church and the World.

In the end, as Ron often signs off on his missives: *Amor vincit omnia*: Love conquers all. *Amen*.

Wayne Northey, Agassiz British Columbia  
December 14, 2017