

Baptists and Anabaptists: The Australian Experience in its Global Context

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Abstract

The article provides an overview of Baptist and Anabaptist connections in a global context, followed by detailed exploration of three key areas: Anabaptist connection with Baptist origins, Anabaptist connection with Baptist identity, and Baptist affinity with specific Anabaptist ideals. The Australian Baptist knowledge of and response to each of these themes is outlined. It is concluded that while Australian Baptist leadership alerted Australian Baptists to all three themes, apart from a minority of Australian Baptists that identified passionately with some Anabaptist ideals, the leadership essentially remained focused on maintaining unity among Baptists so they could corporately engage in evangelism and mission.

Keywords

Baptist origins; Baptist identity; Anabaptist influence; Noel Vose; Ken Manley

Introduction

The research for this article commences with a survey of Baptist and Anabaptist interaction as evidenced in general works on Baptist history and theology. Baptists were those who self-identified as Baptists, although the meaning of the term varied across the 400 years of the writings consulted. Anabaptists were identified as such by others. Initially Anabaptists were identified as ‘re-baptisers’ from the sixteenth century Reformation period along with their spiritual descendants such as Mennonites, Swiss Brethren, Hutterites, and Amish. During debates about Baptist origins and identity both definitions changed. Towards the end of the twentieth century, it became apparent that Anabaptist authors were influencing Baptist theology and practice in discrete areas rather than just concerning the overall question of Baptist identity. While Baptists in Australia were geographically remote from the

transatlantic loci of these debates, the leadership were not only aware of the global discussions but at times contributed to them.¹

The global context is developed by examining publications known to be available and utilised by those who advocated or taught Baptist history and theology in Australia. Themes identified from this review are interrogated against the Australian experience as identified in Australian Baptist publications or international publications by Australian Baptists. These publications are principally Baptist newspapers and state Baptist Union year books (1882–2005). Australian Baptists' contributions to Baptist World Alliance commissions and publications also acted as valuable sources. Material produced by Baptist theological colleges and by Australian Baptist academics in the post-World War Two era proved essential to this project, especially after 1991 when *The Australian Baptist* newspaper ceased publication.

Finally, my personal engagement and correspondence with many of the people involved in this post-World War Two period of Australian Baptist life provided insights to what Australian Baptists were aware of beyond the printed text.

It is also reasonable that I make a disclaimer at this point about my personal experience of this topic. My introduction to Anabaptist studies commenced as an undergraduate at the University of Western Australia in 1974 and was reinforced through personal involvement with Drs Noel and Heather Vose. My doctoral studies (1989–1992) in the United Kingdom on Balthasar Hubmaier brought Anabaptist studies into sharp focus, as did conversations with Alan and Eleanor Kreider and others at the London Mennonite Centre at that time. Subsequently, I undertook research at IBTS in Rüschlikon and Prague, as well as

¹ 'A Baptist Library', *Truth and Progress*, May 1868, pp. 102–103. The author reported to the South Australian Baptist readership the arrival of 'an almost complete series of "The Baptist Magazine"', the first in the series being from 1809, along with the series 'Baptist Mission Periodical Accounts and Annual Reports [...] the earliest volumes go back to 1792'; G. N. Vose, 'A Personal Journey in Understanding', *Baptists and Mennonites in Dialogue: Report on Conversations Between the Baptist World Alliance and the Mennonite World Conference 1989–1992* (Baptist World Alliance, 2013). Vose was Principal of the Baptist Theological College of Western Australia (1963–1990), President General of the Baptist Union of Australia (1975–1978) and President of the Baptist World Alliance (1985–1990).

teaching church history and historical theology to evangelical pastors and church workers from Eastern Europe through TCM International Institute in Austria. All these interactions have shaped my views and biases.

The primary research questions for this project are ‘What did Baptists in Australia know about the role of Anabaptists in the debates about Baptist origins, Baptist identity, and influences on Baptist faith and practice, and how did they respond?’ The article is structured using these three headings. What follows is an exploration of what Baptists in Australia knew about these debates and the influence of Anabaptist theology among Australian Baptists.

The Global Context: Origins

Leon McBeth in *The Baptist Heritage* (1987) provides a summary of four views of Baptist origins: the outgrowth of English Separatism; Anabaptist influence; continuation of biblical teachings; and succession of Baptist churches.² However, taking the debates chronologically entails exploring the early nineteenth century interaction between what became those who supported the idea of the succession of Baptist churches (promoted as Landmarkism from about 1855) and those who argued for the succession of biblical teaching on the church.

J. R. Graves, the leading advocate of Landmarkism, wrote in 1855 an introductory essay to the republication of G. H. Orchard’s work of 1838. Following Orchard, Graves asserted that the Baptist Church began when John the Baptist baptised Jesus and continued in unbroken succession through groups that opposed infant baptism, practised baptism of believers, preferably by immersion, and formed Baptist churches only comprising those baptised believers.³ McBeth reduced the Landmarkist list to four representative groups, the ‘Donatists (fourth

² H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Broadman Press, 1987), pp. 48–60.

³ J. R. Graves, ‘Introductory Essay’ in *A Concise History of Baptists from the Time of Christ their Founder to the 18th Century*, by G. H. Orchard (Lexington, KY: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1956), pp. iii–xxiv (p. xiv). This is a re-publication of the original from 1838. McBeth identifies other Landmarkist authors including J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History: From the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (American Baptist Publication Society, [1869]).

century), Cathari (eleventh century), Waldenses (twelfth century), and Anabaptists (sixteenth century).⁴ McBeth dismissed the claims of Landmarkism stating, 'No major historian today holds to the organic succession of Baptist churches [...] [since it was] based on inadequate sources, was more polemical than historical, and made large assumptions where evidence was lacking.'⁵

In the late nineteenth century, advocates of the 'continuation of biblical teaching' hypothesis for Baptist origins challenged the Landmarkist position. In 1892, H. C. Vedder clearly differentiated this approach from the Landmarkists.⁶ He proposed a hermeneutical rule which he applied only to the New Testament and proceeded to identify a series of principles which define the visible churches. Contra to the Landmarkists, it was not enough that a group opposed infant baptism and practised baptism of believers. For Vedder, true New Testament or apostolic or evangelical churches should meet all the principles he identified.⁷ While it is possible to draw from Vedder the same list of groups identified by the Landmarkists as the true church, the Baptist Church, Vedder only claimed 'these successive revolts constituted a gradual and effective preparation for [...] the Reformation, and for the rise of modern evangelical bodies', whereas Orchard claimed 'the Baptists'[sic] had been *the only Christian community* which has stood since the days of the apostles preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through the ages'.⁸

⁴ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 58.

⁵ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 60.

⁶ H. C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists*, 2nd edn (Judson Press, 1907).

⁷ Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists*, chapter 2, pp. 24–34. 'New Testament churches consisted only of those who were believed to be regenerated by the Spirit of God, and had been baptized on a personal confession of faith in Christ'; 'no more time should separate baptism from conversion than is necessary to ensure credible evidence of a genuine change of heart'. Only those baptized are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. 'The congregations chose each its own pastor', there was 'no idea of the division into "clergy" and "laity" [...] the universal priesthood of believers is unmistakably taught'. 'Sacerdotal ideas are not found'. 'Simple in organization and democratic in government, the New Testament churches were independent of each other in their internal affairs,' yet 'not independent of external obligations.' Worship is on the Lord's Day and not to be confused with the Sabbath as 'the Sabbath is treated as typical and temporary, like circumcision, and done away with as were all the ordinances of the law'.

⁸ Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists*, p. 111. Orchard, *A Concise History of Baptists*, p. 340.

A. H. Newman (1897) defended the claim that Baptists ‘in doctrine and in polity’ were ‘in substantial accord with the precepts and example of Christ and the apostles’ as contained in the New Testament while at the same time opposing Landmarkism.⁹ He concluded that English Baptists were heirs of the apostolic succession of doctrine and polity derived directly from the New Testament and had their origins in the English Separatist tradition, with no influence from Anabaptists.¹⁰

Debate about Baptist origins during the first three decades of the twentieth century continued to echo the differences between Landmarkism and advocates for the New Testament basis of Baptist origins. After the formation of the Baptist World Alliance (1905), a more appreciative view of Anabaptists, particularly Mennonites, found expression in the familial terms used by J. H. Rushbrooke to describe the relationship of Anabaptists and Baptists.¹¹

During World War Two the origin debate took a new direction. In 1943, Mennonite author Harold Bender claimed that sixteenth-century Anabaptists declared and practised ‘the great principles of freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, and voluntarism, so basic to American Protestantism’.¹² However, Bender summarised ‘The Anabaptist Vision’ under three emphases that exclude many groups previously included under the name Anabaptists. These emphases were discipleship, church as brotherhood, the ethic of love and non-resistance, and the associated corollaries of each emphasis.¹³ Franklin Littell in *The Anabaptist View of the Church* (1957) and the revised

⁹ A. H. Newman, *A History of Anti-Pedobaptism: From the Rise of Pedobaptism to A.D. 1609* (American Baptist Publication Society, 1897), pp. 1–2.

¹⁰ Newman, *A History of Anti-Pedobaptism*, pp. 386–391. However, Newman does admit that English General Baptists adopted ‘Socinian anti-Augustinian theology’ mediated through Mennonite influence (p. 393).

¹¹ F. Townley Lord, *Baptist World Alliance: A Short History of the Baptist World Alliance* (The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1955), pp. 15–21.

¹² Harold S. Bender, ‘The Anabaptist Vision’, in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, ed. by Guy F. Herschberger (Herald Press, 1957), pp. 29–54 (p. 30).

¹³ Bender, ‘The Anabaptist Vision’, pp. 42–52.

edition *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism, a Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (1964) ‘included recent European research on Anabaptists not readily available to English readers’.¹⁴ For Littell, ‘the doctrine of the church affords the classifying principle of first importance’ for those groups that can truly be identified as Anabaptists.¹⁵ Littell acknowledges his debt to Ernst Troeltsch’s definition of ‘sect-type’ Christianity and used this in his assessment of the Anabaptist view of the church.¹⁶

A. C. Underwood (1947) also adopted Troeltsch’s understanding of ‘sect-type’ Christianity, utilising it in his discussion of connections between English Baptists and their Anabaptist forebears.¹⁷ Ernest Payne (1940) responded to contemporary scholarship that denied Jesus founded the church while he cited with approval W. T. Whitley’s claim that for Baptists ‘their distinctive claim is the doctrine of the Church’. He nevertheless disagreed with Whitley’s conclusion that Anabaptists contributed nothing to the origins of Baptists.¹⁸ Robert G. Torbet (1950) explored Payne’s ‘plausible’ assertion that Anabaptists ‘affected both Congregational and Baptist development’ and concluded that ‘Anabaptist ideas [...] influenced the English Separatists from whom the early English Baptists emerged’.¹⁹ However, Torbet also noted as ‘plausible’ the theory that English Baptists originated solely from Separatist congregations as argued by William H. Whitsitt, Augustus Strong, John H. Shakespeare, Winthrop S. Hudson, and Mervyn Himbury.²⁰ This debate continued through the 1960s and 70s.

¹⁴ Franklin Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (Macmillan, 1964), p. xiv.

¹⁵ Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism*, p. xviii.

¹⁶ For a full description of the differences between the ‘church-type’ and ‘sect-type’ see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. by Olive Wyon, vol. 1 (Harper Torchbooks, 1960), pp. 331–332.

¹⁷ See A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (Kingsgate Press, 1947), pp. 15–27.

¹⁸ Ernest A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers: Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today*, enlarged edn (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1952), p. 12.

¹⁹ Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd edn (Judson Press, 1963), pp. 21, 25.

²⁰ Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, p. 21.

While William Estep (1963) advocated an Anabaptist contribution, British authors Barington R. White (1971) and Erroll Hulse (1973) presented the counter argument.²¹

In *The Baptist Heritage* (1987) McBeth provided a summary of the debate about Baptist origins which included a specific section on Anabaptists.²² This debate continued over the remainder of the twentieth century and into the new millennium. David Bebbington (2010 and 2018), in his summary of the debate about origins, argues in agreement with Newman that the only Anabaptist influence on English Baptist origins was the adoption of Arminianism by the ‘earliest General Baptists’.²³ Anthony Chute, Nathan Finn, and Michael Haykin (2015) acknowledged the continuing value of McBeth’s ‘magisterial work’ for students of Baptist history and provide a summary of the origin debate for both English and American Baptists.²⁴

Concerning European Baptists, McBeth commented, without further elaboration, that the ‘origin of European Baptists was apparently independent of English sources’.²⁵ Brackney (2005) provided some detail, but tellingly only in a footnote.²⁶ Bebbington did not engage with the debate about European origins though he does acknowledge the ‘eclectic origins’ of Baptists in the Russian Empire.²⁷ However, the history of European Baptists, including issues of origins and the

²¹ William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, rev. edn (Broadman Press, 1975; first published 1963); Barington R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford University Press, 1971); Winthrop S. Hudson, ‘Baptists were not Anabaptists’, *Chronicle*, 16 (October, 1953), pp. 171–179; Mervyn Himbury, *British Baptists: A Short History* (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1963). Himbury at the time of publication of *British Baptists* was Principal of the Victorian Baptist Theological College. Also, Erroll Hulse, *An Introduction to the Baptists* (Carey Publications, 1973) is a popular level book but influential as it was frequently cited in student essays when I taught at Morling College (1993–2007).

²² McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, pp. 48–63.

²³ David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Baylor University Press, 2010), p. 41.

²⁴ Anthony A. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (B&H Academic, 2015), pp. 2, 13–35.

²⁵ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 62.

²⁶ William Brackney, ‘Baptists and Continuity’, in *Distinctively Baptist: Essays on Baptist History, A Festschrift in Honor of Walter B. Shurden*, ed. by Marc A. Jolley with John D. Pierce (Mercer University Press, 2005), pp. 39–57 (p. 49).

²⁷ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, p. 245.

potential influence of Anabaptists, has been consistently addressed since the formation of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905, and continues to be through publications of the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS established in 1949 in Rüschlikon, Switzerland).²⁸

The Global Context: Identity

Baptist studies moved on to seeking to define Baptist identity. This exploration of Baptist identity initially intersected with rehabilitated Anabaptist research around the topic of the restoration of the New Testament church.²⁹ The ecumenically minded Ernest Payne championed this approach under the 'Free Church' banner.³⁰ Jack Hoad opined that this Baptist approach to ecumenism would end in an 'apostate conglomerate' religion of all nations if 'baptists' were not faithful to their heritage.³¹ Hoad went on to compare the lists of baptist distinctives compiled by British Baptist G. R. Beasley-Murray, at that time a professor at Rüschlikon, and Joseph M. Stockwell from the American General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Hoad

²⁸ For a representative collection of the views of those who continued to argue for Anabaptist influence see *Exploring Baptist Origins*, ed. by Anthony R. Cross and Nicholas J. Wood, Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies, 1 (Regent's Park College, 2010). Significant authors writing on European Baptist history and related issues include J. H. Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe* (Carey Press, 1915); Irwin Barnes, *Truth is Immortal: The Story of Baptists in Europe* (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1955); Ernest A. Payne, *Out of Great Tribulation: Baptist in the U.S.S.R* (London: Baptist Union, 1974); Ian. M. Randall, *Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginnings in Europe* (Neufeld Verlag, 2009); Toivo Pilli, 'The Reformation in Central and Eastern Europe', in *The Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary*, ed. by Corneliu Constantineanu and Peter Penner (Langham Global Library, 2023), pp. 360–361; Martin Rothkegel, 'Mähren als Gelobtes Land: Migrationserfahrung und Heilsgeschichte bei den Hutterischen Brüdern', in *Reformation als Kommunikationsprozess, Norm und Struktur: Studien zum sozialen Wandel in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Petr Hrachovec, Gerd Schwerhoff, Winfried Müller, and Martina Schattkowsky (Brill, 2021), pp. 361–380.

²⁹ *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. by Guy F. Hershberger (Herald Press, 1957); Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. by Olive Wyon, 2 vols (Harper & Row, 1960); Franklin Hamil Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (Macmillan Company, 1964); George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Westminster Press, 1962).

³⁰ Ernest A. Payne, *Free Churchmen, Unrepentant and Repentant and other Papers* (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1965).

³¹ Jack Hoad, *The Baptist: An Historical and Theological Study of the Baptist Identity* (London: Grace Publication Trust, 1986), p. 1.

considered Beasley-Murray's list deficient as it did not include the 'Sole Authority and Sufficiency of the Holy Scripture', which along with 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Church' were for Hoad the two primary baptist distinctives from which all other baptist distinctives flowed. Hoad happily identified Anabaptists as being part of the 'baptist' family, as in his view they adhered to these two fundamental distinctives.³²

It might be argued that James McClendon Jr's 'Re-Envisioning Baptist Identity: A Manifesto for Baptist Communities in North America' (1997)³³ provided the culmination of this debate when he used a more extended definition of 'baptists' rather than the institutionally organised Baptists. However, it is clear the *Manifesto* did not conclude this debate, rather it provided a focus for the ongoing debate about Baptist identity. Walter Shurden (1998) provided a masterful overview of approaches used to define Baptist identity as well as a nuanced critique of the *Manifesto*. He concluded that the *Manifesto* 'reinterprets the Baptist identity too much in terms of the Anabaptist identity'.³⁴

Bebbington (2010) devoted a chapter to the issue of Baptist identity, providing a useful summary of the global context of this debate.³⁵ He argues that prior to the 1908 publication of E. Y. Mullins's *Axioms of Religion*, Baptists in both Britain and the USA were comfortable with their identity being derived from a core distinctive, the doctrine of the church as defined by Scripture. Mullins produced a persuasive new paradigm encapsulated in the phrase 'soul competency' that moved authority from the 'written text [...] to personal experience' from which everything else flowed. Bebbington asserted that Rushbrooke followed Mullins's lead in identifying 'soul competency' as the 'unifying principle' that made Baptist theology distinct, thus providing global reach for this new view of Baptist identity.³⁶

³² Hoad, *The Baptist*, pp. 11–17, 47.

³³ James Wm McClendon Jr, 'Re-Envisioning Baptist Identity: A Manifesto for Baptist Communities in North America', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 24:3 (1997), pp. 303–310.

³⁴ Walter Shurden, 'The Baptist Identity and the Baptist Manifesto', Center for Baptist Studies <<http://www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/shurden/Baptist%20Manifesto.htm>> [accessed 20 February 2025].

³⁵ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, pp. 255–274.

³⁶ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, pp. 259–260.

Inerrancy became an issue among Baptists in the USA and UK initially related to Bible commentaries on Genesis. The issue was popularised by Harold Lindsell in *The Battle for the Bible* (1976) and stated academically in the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy (1978). Among Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches the dispute over inerrancy led to a conservative versus moderates 'war', which saw the conservatives take total control of the SBC's presidency, and its major committees and entities, by 1990. Bebbington cites Walter Shurden as representative of the moderates' view that identified 'freedom' as the core of Baptist identity. While 'freedom' was Shurden's overall motif for Baptist identity, he did prioritise 'Bible freedom' as the first necessary step for individual believers to interpret Scripture.³⁷ Stanley Norman argued for 'Reformation Baptist distinctives' which 'asserts the primacy of biblical authority' as the true core of Baptist identity as opposed to 'Enlightenment Baptist distinctives' as advocated by Shurden.³⁸

The outcome of these debates about identity led to fragmentation of both 'moderates' and 'conservatives', which must have dismayed Norman who predicted division and demise only of the 'moderates'.³⁹ Where it could reasonably be expected that Anabaptist views on freedom, the authority of Scripture, and the church would be mentioned in this SBC identity debate, Bebbington makes no comment. Rather he identifies Baptists such as Ernest Payne, William Estep, and Paige Patterson as those who had an 'affinity for the Anabaptists' who influenced the discussion of Baptist identity.⁴⁰ This group will be explored separately under the heading 'Anabaptist Influence'.

Bill Leonard (1990) provided an alternative interpretation to Shurden on the fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention. Whereas Shurden identified what held the SBC together as 'missionary, not doctrinal' emphasis, Leonard suggested it was both. Referring to the principles enunciated by James P. Boyce in 1874, Leonard suggested the

³⁷ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, p. 263. See Walter Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993).

³⁸ Stan Norman, 'Fight the Good Fight: The Struggle for a Baptist Identity', Baptist2Baptist <<http://www.baptist2baptist.net/b2barticle.asp?ID=236>> [accessed 14 December 2024].

³⁹ Norman, 'Fight the Good Fight'.

⁴⁰ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, p. 270.

following principles: ‘A clear expression of the “fundamental doctrines of grace” broadly identified as evangelical doctrines; the promotion of what was “universally prevalent” among Southern Baptist Churches; and that “upon no point, upon which the denomination is divided, should the Convention, and through it the Seminary, take a position”.’⁴¹ Leonard claimed that Southern Baptists generally accepted these principles as ‘doctrines [that] were articulated in such a way as to make room for congregations that represented a variety of diverse theological traditions’. Leonard argued that Southern Baptist identity coalesced around this ‘Grand Compromise’ until 1979 when it proved to be something of a Trojan horse for the SBC.⁴²

The historiography of Baptist theology fed into the SBC ‘denominational quarrel’ resulting in the production of a volume — *Baptist Theologians* edited by Timothy George and David Dockery — that invited Baptist scholars ‘from diverse perspectives’ to ‘experience, perhaps, the miracle of dialogue’.⁴³ Beyond the fragmentation of the SBC another study in Baptist theology supported an alternative ‘baptist’ identity, specifically identifying the contribution of Continental Anabaptism to the roots of Baptist identity.⁴⁴ Interestingly, only in the concluding chapter of *Baptist Theologians* does Dockery make one passing mention of Mennonites.⁴⁵

Slayden Yarbrough challenged the moderates’ objection to ‘creedalism’ in 1983⁴⁶ and in 2000 identified confessions as playing a significant role in developing Southern Baptist identity.⁴⁷ He cited with approval William L. Lumpkin’s conclusion that Baptists had no centralised structure to impose ‘doctrinal uniformity’ on Baptists

⁴¹ Bill J. Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Eerdmans, 1990), p. 38.

⁴² Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, p. 39.

⁴³ *Baptist Theologians*, ed. by Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Broadman & Holman, 1999), p. ix.

⁴⁴ James Leo Garrett Jr, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Mercer University Press, 2009), pp. 8–16.

⁴⁵ *Baptist Theologians*, ed. by George and Dockery, p. 685.

⁴⁶ Slayden Yarbrough, ‘Is Creedalism a Threat to Southern Baptists?’, *Baptist History and Heritage*, 18 (April 1983), pp. 21–33 (pp. 25–28).

⁴⁷ Slayden Yarbrough, *Southern Baptists: A Historical, Ecclesiological, and Theological Heritage of a Confessional People* (Southern Baptist Historical Society, 2000), pp. 88–96.

through ‘authoritative creeds’. However, he notes that following amendments to the SBC’s *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1998 and 2000, ‘Southern Baptists were at a crossroads concerning their historic tradition relating to the nature and purpose of confessional statements and concerns over doctrinal integrity.’⁴⁸ While Timothy and Denise George declared Baptists as a non-creedal people, they put a signpost at the crossroads pointing to the validity of a ‘voluntary, conscientious adherence to an explicit doctrinal standard’ as part of Baptist heritage.⁴⁹

Historic investigations of Confessions were not new to Baptists, as Yarbrough’s citation of Lumpkin attests. Glen Stassen’s article in 1998 argued for some Mennonite influence on the Particular Baptists’ 1644 ‘First London Confession’.⁵⁰ Earlier, Lumpkin included discussion on six Anabaptist confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Timothy and Denise George only included what is generally known as the ‘Schleitheim Confession’.⁵¹ The Georges included this confession to demonstrate ‘certain affinities’ with early Baptists but rejected the ‘ingenuity’ of those Baptist historians who argued for a ‘genetic connection’ between Anabaptist and Baptist.⁵²

The Global Context: Anabaptist Influence

Overlapping the period of the debate about Baptist identity, Baptists began to show the influence of a new generation of Anabaptist authors, and of other authors who engaged with Anabaptist convictions, on

⁴⁸ Yarbrough, *Southern Baptists*, pp. 89, 96.

⁴⁹ *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, ed. by Timothy George and Denise George (Broadman & Holman, 1996), p. 3.

⁵⁰ Glen Harold Stassen, ‘Opening Menno Simon’s Foundation-Book and Finding the Father of Baptist Origins Along-side the Mother-Calvinist Congregationalism’, *Baptist History and Heritage*, 33 (Spring 1998), pp. 34–44.

⁵¹ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. edn (Judson Press, 1969), pp. 18–78; *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, ed. by George and George.

⁵² *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, ed. by George and George, pp. 5–6. The ‘genetic connection’ probably refers to ideas being developed by Bill Brackney and published in 2004. William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Mercer University Press, 2004).

specific areas of Baptist life and practice. The most notable areas were church, mission, radical discipleship, justice, and peace.⁵³

In his discussion about Baptist identity, Bebbington identified a strand of Baptists who had an ‘affinity for the Anabaptists’.⁵⁴ This affinity was noted under the themes of historical investigation of Baptist origins, pacifism, post-Christendom emphasis, mission, witness under suffering, and as an alternative to Calvinism.⁵⁵ In addition to Bebbington’s list, Malcom Yarnell focused on Anabaptist theological method and hermeneutics as needing to significantly inform contemporary Baptists.⁵⁶

Bebbington also noted the personal influence of Alan and Ellie Kreider at the London Mennonite Centre as especially important to the promotion of Anabaptist ideals in the United Kingdom through their relationship with Nigel Wright. He also noted that IBTS included the ‘study of their [Anabaptist] legacy alongside that of the Baptists’.⁵⁷ Among those involved in the international promotion of Anabaptist ideals the significant contribution of Wayne Pipkin should also be appreciated.⁵⁸

⁵³ Some of the significant works were as follows: John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1972); David W. Shenk and Ervin R. Stutzman, *Creating Communities of the Kingdom* (Herald Press, 1988); Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (InterVarsity Press, 1982); Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom? How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and Christian Nation is a Bad Idea* (Abingdon Press, 1991); Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things To Come* (Hendrickson, 2003); Stuart Murry, *Post-Christendom: Church and Ministry in a Strange New World* (Paternoster, 2004).

⁵⁴ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, p. 270.

⁵⁵ Paige Patterson concluded ‘the future is bright only if Baptists identify with and imitate the Anabaptists. The current trend in Southern Baptist life to identify with the Reformed faith is a major step backward and must be resisted.’ Paige Patterson ‘What Contemporary Baptists Can Learn from the Anabaptists’, in *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists: Restoring New Testament Christianity: Essays in Honor of Paige Patterson*, ed. by Malcolm Yarnell (B&H Academic, 2013), pp. 11–26 (p. 25).

⁵⁶ Malcolm Yarnell, ‘The Anabaptist Theological Method: “For What They Were Concerned with Was not Luther’s, but Rather God’s Word”’, in *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists*, ed. by Malcolm Yarnell, pp. 27–48 (pp. 46–48).

⁵⁷ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, p. 270.

⁵⁸ H. Wayne Walker Pipkin, *Scholar, Pastor, Martyr: The Life and Ministry of Balthasar Hubmaier (ca. 1480–1528)* (International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008). On the publication details page is this note, ‘formerly Professor of Church History and founder of the Institute of Baptist and

Bebbington's comments provided an excellent starting point for a discussion of influence of Anabaptist thought among Baptists, though some broad categories such as mission should be expanded to include radical discipleship, social justice, and relief aid, and other areas could be added, such as 'communalism', worship, and the atonement.

Baptists accessed these Anabaptist ideals through written sources, personal conversations, and oral presentations. The works of Ernest Payne and William Estep introduced Baptists to the writings of Anabaptists they may not otherwise have read and of non-Anabaptist writers who were writing about Anabaptists. Between December 2023 and May 2024, Chatfield organised interviews with some members of the BWA Heritage and Identity Commission and other Baptists known to have an interest in Anabaptist studies,⁵⁹ and it is notable that Estep's *The Anabaptist Story* was commented on as the book that introduced them to Anabaptist studies, with the bibliography of the 1975 revised edition providing an excellent resource for further detailed reading.

Mennonites began their own publishing campaigns to promote their changing vision of themselves. The *Mennonite Quarterly Review* commenced in 1927, and the Institute of Mennonite Studies initiated two projects aimed at engaging the broader Christian world. The Classics of the Radical Reformation series commenced in 1973 and made accessible in English translation primary source material of sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The second project, the Christian Mission and Modern Culture (1995–) included Mennonite and non-Mennonite authors. The editorial committee described the series as 'a forum where conventional assumptions can be challenged and alternative formulations explored'.⁶⁰ It also supported Mennonite

Anabaptist Studies at the International Baptist Theological Seminary'. Pipkin was also on the Editorial Board of *Christian Mission and Culture*.

⁵⁹ A link to the interviews can be found on the Heritage and Identity website <<https://bwabaptistheritage.org/500-years-free-to-follow-jesus-christ-as-lord/>> [accessed 10 March 2025].

⁶⁰ 'Preface to the Series', in *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World*, ed. by Barry A. Harvey, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Trinity Press International, 1999), pp. vii–viii.

writers exploring the nexus between ‘ecclesiology and eschatology’ and the ethics of Jesus.⁶¹

Herald Press became a publisher familiar to Baptists, especially those interested in mission and church planting. Representative of the Mennonite authors published by Herald Press are David W. Shenk and Ervin R. Stutzman and their 1988 work *Creating Communities of the Kingdom: New Testament Models of Church Planting*.

The number of publishers open to Baptist authors reflected the theological divisions among Baptists in the USA. Bebbington noted that Baylor (1990) and Mercer (2005) Universities separated from the SBC and began promoting non-Southern Baptist authors.⁶² In the UK, Paternoster promoted Baptist authors through its series *Studies in Baptist History and Thought*, as did Regent’s Park College, Centre for Baptist History and Heritage. Significant British Baptist authors promoted via Paternoster included David Bebbington, Paul Fiddes, Anthony Cross, Brian Haymes, Ruth Gouldbourne, Nigel Wright, and Ian Randall. Non-British Baptist authors included Michael Haykin (Canada/USA), Ken Manley (Australia), Toivo Pilli (Estonia), and Martin Sutherland (New Zealand).

Baptist and non-Baptist authors were influenced by the new Anabaptists. A brief sample would include USA Baptists Stanley Grenz and James Leo Garret Jr. Both acknowledged their engagement with Anabaptist ideas. Among UK Baptists Paul Fiddes, Ian Randall, and Keith Jones all incorporated Anabaptist ideas, often with some modification.

A sample of non-Baptist authors influenced by Anabaptist ideals should include Stanley Hauerwas, a United Methodist, who presented a new view of Christendom that developed Anabaptist ideas embedded in the debate over Christendom.⁶³ Stuart Murray from a Quaker background had also enjoyed stimulating conversations at the London Mennonite Centre with the Kreiders and Nigel Wright. He remains

⁶¹ John Howard Yoder, ‘Preface to the First Edition’, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd edn (Eerdmans and Paternoster, 1994), pp. x–xi.

⁶² Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, p. 264.

⁶³ Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom?*

associated with Nigel Wright in the Anabaptist Network and was instrumental in developing the Centre for Anabaptist Studies at Bristol Baptist College after the closure of the London Mennonite Centre.⁶⁴

Institutions also showed the influence of Anabaptist studies. The article has already referred to the Anabaptist research focus at IBTS and the Centre for Anabaptist Studies at Bristol Baptist College. Acadia University established the Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies in 1991; its first Director was Jarold K. Zeman.⁶⁵ While Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary did not create a formal Centre for Anabaptist studies, as Bebbington rightly points out, Paige Patterson strongly encouraged his students to undertake research in Anabaptist ideas and personalities. A sample of doctoral candidates at Southwestern also indicates the international reach of this influence.⁶⁶

Baptist institutions frequently held conferences on specific themes, often reflecting the passion of a particular faculty member. Contributors to these conferences could be Baptist or from other Christian traditions, including Anabaptist traditions. It was through such conferences that Anabaptist ideals were discussed, and networks of interested academics emerged to continue the discussions and publish their findings. Paul Fiddes provided an English example of this process in his acknowledgements to *Tracks and Traces* where he gave a detailed list of how the chapters developed in this way.⁶⁷ A North American example is provided by a 2013 publication that compiled essays

⁶⁴ Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Ministry in a Strange New World* (Paternoster, 2004), and *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Herald Press, 2010).

⁶⁵ Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies <<https://acadiadiv.ca/acbas/about/>> [accessed 26 September 2024].

⁶⁶ Samuel Beyung-Doo Nam, 'A Comparative Study of the Baptismal Understanding of Augustine, Luther, Zwingli and Hubmaier' (doctoral dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002); Jason J. Graffagninon, 'The Shaping of the Two Earliest Anabaptist Confessions' (doctoral dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008); Simon Victor Goncharenko, 'The Importance of Church Discipline within Balthasar Hubmaier's Theology' (doctoral dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011); Marc Brunson, 'The Influence of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism as Exemplified by Balthasar Hubmaier on Baptist Beliefs and Practices' (doctoral dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021).

⁶⁷ Paul Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 13 (Paternoster, 2003), pp. xiii–xv.

presented at a 2012 conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁶⁸

As one who has attended many conferences, I agree that conversations over coffee or around a meal after a presentation stimulate further reflection often leading to publications, both academic and popular. Such a process has been fundamental to the dissemination of Anabaptist ideas in Australia. So, how did Australian Baptists get to know about the debates about Anabaptism and how have they responded? What follows is an exploration of the Australian experience of these debates.

Baptists in Australia

First a general note about Baptists in Australia. The British established a penal colony at Sydney in 1788. When the first Baptists arrived in Sydney is unknown. The first self-identifying Baptist appeared in an 1828 census and the first Baptist minister caused something of a sensation in Sydney in 1831 when he baptised two women at Woolloomooloo Bay in Sydney. 1834 saw Baptist ministers arrive in Sydney and Hobart (Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania). From this date Baptists have established themselves in all the states and territories that make up Australia. The story of Baptists in Australia and Australian Baptists' involvement in mission has thankfully been written.⁶⁹

The Australian Experience: Origins

Were Baptists in Australia aware of the origin debate and how did they respond? Baptists in Australia were aware of books that contained both sides of this debate. As early as 1872, Baptists in South Australia were aware of J. M. Cramp's *Baptist History*. In the South Australian Baptist Newspaper *Truth and Progress*, an author quotes from Cramp who is

⁶⁸ *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists*, ed. by Malcolm Yarnell, p. ix.

⁶⁹ For a comprehensive coverage of Baptists in Australia, see Ken R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists*, 2 vols, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 16.1 and 16.2 (Paternoster, 2006); for the story of Australian Baptist involvement in mission, see *From Five Barley Loaves: Australian Baptists in Global Mission 1864–2010*, ed. by Tony Cupit, Ros Gooden, and Ken Manley (Mosaic Press, 2013).

citing resolutions of a 1689 General Assembly in London regarding disciplining those who will not contribute financially to the churches and for the sin of pride in their apparel, noting that nothing much has changed over two hundred years.⁷⁰

In 1894, W. T. Whitley, then Principal of the Victorian Baptist Theological College, critiqued the Church of England minister Revd A. E. Green's dismissive comments about Baptists and their objection to infant baptism by closely following Thomas Armitage's work of 1887. In that work, Armitage traced 'Baptist principles continuously' from the time of the apostles. Green dismissed references to Novatians, Donatists, and Paulicians, Peter and Henry of Lausanne, and the Waldenses. Whitley acknowledged them as 'honoured predecessors' of the Baptists.⁷¹ While there may be predecessors to Baptists on the Continent, Whitley clearly states that Baptists began in England in 1616 'as the result of a schism from the Independents, and in 1640, a second congregation of Particular Baptists was established in London'.⁷² Revd A. Bird in 1895 suggested that in Victoria there was an 'absence among Baptists' of a "sense of historic continuity".⁷³ He proposed Armitage's work as an antidote to this problem. However, in neither article are Anabaptists mentioned, despite their appearance in Armitage.

In a follow up to his 1894 article, in August 1895 Whitley proposed two foundational principles from which he derived seven corollaries that in his view encapsulated what it meant to be a Baptist. He declared, 'Continuity in doctrine is the only continuity of value to Baptists'.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he was willing to 'hail those who link us to the Apostolic doctrine' and provided an extensive list of these groups, starting with the Montanists and finishing with the Anabaptists and Mennonites. He further identified some Baptists who brought honour

⁷⁰ H. H. 'Baptist Views in 1689', *Truth and Progress*, August 1872, pp. 87–88, citing Cramp, *Baptist History: From the Foundation of the Christian Church*, pp. 485–486.

⁷¹ Rev. A. Bird, 'Notes of an Address on the Baptists by Rev A. E. Green', *Truth and Progress*, 18 January 1894, pp. 25–26.

⁷² This evidence challenges McBeth's claim that Whitley changed his view about the origins of English Baptists in 1923. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 50.

⁷³ Rev. A. Bird, 'Some of the Lessons of a Nine-Year Ministry in Victoria', *Southern Baptist*, 28 November 1895, p. 268.

⁷⁴ W. T. Whitley, 'Why I am a Baptist', *Southern Baptist*, 15 August 1895, p. 183.

to the name Baptist. He began with the Anabaptist ‘Hubmeyer, in Switzerland’.⁷⁵

The debate about Baptist origins and the role of Anabaptism was explicitly addressed in March 1896. The editor of *The Southern Baptist* summarised two articles from US sources in an article ‘The Anabaptists’.⁷⁶ Citing with approval the work of Scheffer and Cornelius, the author depicts Dutch Anabaptism as the ‘stock’ from which sprang ‘the Mennonites, the Congregationalists, the Baptists and the Quakers’. While Baptists are alleged to have come from the same stock as these others, the author states that it was only the Baptists who ‘stood for its great principles in their entirety as regulative of the true Christian Church’. In his presidential address to the Tasmanian Baptist Union, Pastor E. Walton included a reference to the March 1896 article ‘The Anabaptists’.⁷⁷ He noted what Anabaptists stood for:

The liberation of religion from sectarian, priestly, and political control; the elimination of the mob of middle-men in religion, and the swarm of mediators between God and man; the practical abolition of monopoly and privilege in religion; the separation of Church and State; freedom of conscience; the priesthood of believers; the rights of the independent congregation; honest translation of the Bible; the liberty of prophesying; prison reform; abolition of slavery; the salvation of infants and of seekers after God in non-Christian lands; the equalisation of the sexes in religion and privilege, and in a world, social, political, as well as spiritual reforms.⁷⁸

He concluded, ‘We have no need to be ashamed of our spiritual forefathers, and also that we, like them, still need to stand for certain great principles of the true Church.’ At least for this Tasmanian Baptist, the Anabaptists provided something more than Baptist precursor doctrinal principles drawn from the New Testament or examples of

⁷⁵ Whitley, ‘Why I am a Baptist’, p. 184.

⁷⁶ The Watchman, ‘The Anabaptists’, *Southern Baptist*, 12 March 1896, p. 52. The editor refers to the two articles by Richard Heath, ‘Early Anabaptism’, in the *Contemporary Review* for April, and Revd W. E. Griffis, D.D., ‘The Anabaptists’, in the *New World* for December. The editor does not provide full names for Scheffer and Cornelius and simply notes these Dutch authors have shown that ‘it was the Anabaptists who profoundly moved the [Dutch] people’. I suspect the editor is referring to J. G. de Hoop Scheffer and C. A. Cornelius.

⁷⁷ E. Walton, ‘Conditions of Effective Church Life’, *The Southern Baptist*, 4 June 1896, pp. 110–111.

⁷⁸ Walton, ‘Conditions of Effective Church Life’, p. 111.

suffering persecution for the truth of the Gospel. Those who opposed Baptists frequently sought to discredit Baptists by linking them to the 'wild revolutionary deeds of the Anabaptists of Munster' but this identification was utterly rejected.⁷⁹

In August 1896, readers of *The Southern Baptist* were made aware of the debate about English Baptist origins shifting focus to when immersion baptism commenced. Whitsitt, noted by McBeth as a proponent of the English Separatist origins thesis, was reported to have asserted the English Baptists 'did not immerse until about 1640'. This was taken to implying that English Baptist origins were in the Puritan stream of Independents and Separatists. The Canadian Baptist E. O. White countered by providing evidence that the church in England continued the old English tradition of immersion baptism providing examples from 1595, 1605, 1625, and 1630. He also claimed that in the early sixteenth century Baptists on the Continent, wrongly named Anabaptists, had also practised immersion baptism. Taking immersion baptism as the test for defining Baptists, White concluded that Baptists began on the Continent among Swiss and German groups wrongly labelled Anabaptists.⁸⁰

Baptists in Australia were now aware of a shift in the debate about Baptist origins. Did Baptists originate separately from any sixteenth-century Anabaptist contact or did Baptists owe their origin in some way to sixteenth-century continental Anabaptists? That debate would not be concluded until after World War Two.

Baptist and Anabaptist connections were also reflected in the promotion of reading material. The readership of *The Southern Standard* which covered South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria had seen references to Cramp in 1872, and Armitage (cited by Whitley, then Principal of the Victorian Baptist Theological College) in 1894 and 1895. In 1896 Armitage, Cramp, and North are grouped together as 'excellent books to give the facts' on Baptist origins, while Whitsitt is engaged in

⁷⁹ F. J. Wilkin, 'The Home Mission: Support the Test of Patriotism', *The Southern Baptist*, 18 June 1896, p. 127.

⁸⁰ E. O. White, 'Early English Baptists', *The Southern Baptist*, 13 August 1896, pp. 170–171 (p. 170).

debate in 1895–1896 over the issue of ‘immersion baptism’. When identifying books to send to a mission library in Mymensingh in 1897, Cramp is nominated. While a Western Australian Baptist layman cited Cramp in 1898, the Victorian Bookroom began to promote Vedder’s *A Short History of the Baptists* as something ‘every young Baptist should read’, and in 1899 Vedder’s work is listed alongside Principal Whitley’s *Witness of History to Baptist Principles* and R. Heath’s *Anabaptism*. In 1901, The Baptist Book Depot, New South Wales, had a special a series of books and tracts for only 15 shillings! Second on the list was Vedder’s *Short History of the Baptists*. However, in 1922 the Acting Principal of the New South Wales (NSW) Baptist Theological College, G. H. Morling, was teaching church history and Baptist principles using Cramp’s *Baptist History*.⁸¹ Anyone reading the whole of Cramp or Vedder could not avoid being aware that these authors advocated a connection between English Baptists and Anabaptists. Cramp provided readers with six chapters (89 pages) on Anabaptists, while Vedder provided four chapters (90 pages). What understanding of the connection between Anabaptists and Baptists they took from their reading was reflected in their articles, letters, and sermons published in their newspapers and year books.

Australian Baptists had a deep and sustained interest in the success of European Baptists. This was especially so in South Australia with its large German population.⁸² The hero of European Baptist mission was J. G. Oncken who became a Baptist in 1834. He was presented as the exemplar of a modern missionary and his mantra ‘every believer a missionary’ was used to challenge Baptists to engage more vigorously in mission both overseas and at home.⁸³ Oncken’s personal journey to becoming a Baptist was not only inspirational but also vindicated those people who asserted that a person could become a Baptist directly from the New Testament without needing contact with those already acknowledged as Baptists.⁸⁴ Mention of Anabaptists and

⁸¹ As a personal note, I have the copy of Cramp that my wife’s grandfather used as one of his extra mural textbooks during his ministerial training 1923–1930.

⁸² ‘Persecution and Progress in Europe’, *Truth and Progress*, August 1868, pp. 166–167.

⁸³ J. B. Sneyd, ‘Revivals Considered in Connection with Personal Effort’, in Annual Meetings of the South Australian Baptist Association, *Truth and Progress*, October 1877, pp. 115–130 (p. 127).

⁸⁴ ‘Early Days of the Baptist church in Berlin’, *Truth and Progress*, April 1873, pp. 38–40.

Mennonites were often made by Oncken for the role they played in preparing the way for the success of Baptist work in Romania and Russia and for their example of suffering persecution for their faith.⁸⁵

The formation of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) in 1905 provided a focus for Baptist missionary work in Europe, especially through the personal visits and reports of J. H. Rushbrooke.⁸⁶ Rushbrooke became the Commissioner for European Baptist Missions at the 1920 BWA Congress in London. Primarily through the work of Rushbrooke, relief aid and advocacy for religious freedom became major aspects of the work of the BWA. In his discussions with government representatives, Rushbrooke urged not only the cessation of persecution of Baptists but religious freedom for all, including the Baptists' kin, the Mennonites.⁸⁷ Through the pages of *The Australian Baptist* newspaper, the work of Rushbrooke was kept before Australian Baptists, often with an emphasis on the cooperative nature of mission work in Europe, especially Bible distribution alongside Mennonites.⁸⁸ Rushbrooke visited Australia in 1932 and in August presented a series of papers to the Australian Triennial Baptist Assembly in Adelaide, where Baptist representatives from each state were gathered. While his address 'The Historic Witness of the Baptists' clearly rejected a Landmarkist understanding of Baptist history, he nonetheless evoked a strong family connection to the Anabaptists of the Reformation period,

⁸⁵ 'The London May Meetings', *Truth and Progress*, August 1872, pp. 90–93 (p. 91); 'The Mission Field', *Truth and Progress*, August 1873, p. 91. Oncken's influence extended as far as India when Mennonite Brethren Church missionaries who had appropriated some of Oncken's Baptist ideas commenced work among the Telugu of India in the 1880s. See 'Mennonite Brethren Church', *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia* <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite_Brethren_Church#India> [accessed 28 February 2025]. A church contact described how his great grandfather, a local Baptist minister trained in the American Baptist Telugu Seminary in the 1930s, was seconded to the Mennonite Brethren Church and cooperated in planting Mennonite Brethren Churches in the Hyderabad area (personal communication, 27 February 2025).

⁸⁶ Lord, *Baptist World Alliance: A Short History*, pp. 15–21.

⁸⁷ Lord, *Baptist World Alliance: A Short History*, pp. 39–42.

⁸⁸ J. H. Rushbrooke, 'Facts from Russia', *The Australian Baptist*, 21 November 1922, p. 4; Rushbrooke, 'Astounding Baptist Progress: A Century's Increase', *The Australian Baptist*, 18 June 1929, p. 1; Anon., 'We Glory in Those Who Went Before: Baptists and World Conquest', *The Australian Baptist*, 27 August 1929, p. 1; Rushbrooke, 'Fifth Baptist World Congress', *The Australian Baptist*, 27 October 1931, p. 5.

declaring Hubmaier ‘bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh’.⁸⁹ Rushbrooke’s sentiments about the Anabaptists were positively echoed in the 1932 NSW presidential address of Robert Goodman, who had been in Adelaide. Goodman proudly declared he was Australian born and trained for ministry only in Australia, implying that his views on Anabaptism were sourced in Australia rather than in English or American Baptist institutions.⁹⁰ If Australian Baptists considered Anabaptists and Mennonites at all, it was most likely in familial terms with some appreciation that Baptists and Anabaptists both relied on the New Testament as the source for their ecclesiology.

Australian Baptists were keenly aware of these debates. The editor of *The Australian Baptist* included several series of articles on Baptist history and distinctives written by different Australian Baptists.⁹¹ These debates were not only followed by readers of *The Australian Baptist*, but two Australian Baptists made significant global contributions. Both Noel Vose and Ken Manley completed their initial theological training under G. H. Morling at the New South Wales Baptist Theological College. Vose, from Western Australia, went on to complete postgraduate studies in the USA, first at Northern Seminary in Chicago (1959) where Dr Mosteller introduced him to new understandings of Anabaptism. Vose completed his doctorate at the University of Iowa (1960–1963) on the Puritan divine John Owen. However, it was Vose’s engagement with Mennonites in the USA that set him on the path to establish the Western Australian Baptist Theological College as a centre for Baptist and Anabaptist studies.⁹² Manley travelled to the UK, starting at Bristol Baptist College (1964), then, under the supervision of Barry White, completed his doctorate on

⁸⁹ ‘Happy Days in Adelaide. Triennial Baptist Assembly: Dr Rushbrooke’s Memorable Messages’, *The Australian Baptist*, 30 August 1932, pp. 1–3 (p. 1).

⁹⁰ Robert Goodman, ‘Baptists at their Best’, *The Australian Baptist*, 27 September 1932, pp. 1–12 (p. 7). This edition of *The Australian Baptist* has extensive enthusiastic coverage of Rushbrooke’s visits to Sydney, Canberra, and Hobart.

⁹¹ Australian Baptist authors included Ken Manley who, under new editor of *The Australian Baptist* Tom Cardwell, commenced a weekly column ‘Despatch’ in 1974, with a special series on Baptist Distinctives; Basil Brown, ‘Baptist Principles’, 6 parts, *The Australian Baptist*, 1979; Noel Vose, ‘Our Anabaptist Heritage’, 10 parts, *The Australian Baptist*, 1979.

⁹² Richard K. Moore, *Noel Vose: Pastor, Principal, President: A Biography of Godfrey Noel Vose* (The Baptist Historical Society of Western Australia, 2010), pp. 108–131.

John Rippon at Regent's Park College Oxford (1965–1967). Manley became a staunch advocate of the Separatist origins of English Baptists.⁹³

Vose became President of the BWA in 1985 and played a significant role in initiating the Baptist-Mennonite dialogue (1989–1992).⁹⁴ Manley became a significant member of the BWA Study and Research Division to which he contributed numerous papers on Baptist identity. While both acknowledged sixteenth-century Anabaptists shared similar ideas about the church as drawn from Scripture, Vose went further than Manley in quietly supporting the view that the ideas of sixteenth-century Anabaptists permeated late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England and probably had some influence on the development of English Puritans, Independents, and Separatists. In an interview published in *The Festival*, Vose is quoted as saying his 'heart is with Estep, but he believes White is more accurate, historically'.⁹⁵

The question of Baptist origins reached something of a consensus among historians by the late 1980s. The focus of Baptist writers moved on to the question of Baptist identity.

The Australian Experience: Identity

As previously seen, Baptists in Australia were very aware of the origins debate and the contested role of Anabaptists in Baptist origins, especially in the writings of Vose and Manley.

Both Vose and Manley were commissioned in the 1980s by the editor of The Clifford Press to write on Baptist identity.⁹⁶ Both being

⁹³ Ken R. Manley, *For All That Has Been – Thanks!* (Ashburton, Victoria: Mono Unlimited, 2018), pp. 148–165. For advocacy of Puritan-Separatist origins see Ken R. Manley, 'Origins of the Baptists: The Case for Development from Puritanism-Separatism', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 22.4 (1987), pp. 34–46.

⁹⁴ Baptist World Alliance, *Baptists and Mennonites in Dialogue: Report on Conversations Between the Baptist World Alliance and the Mennonite World Conference 1989–1992* (Baptist World Alliance, 2013).

⁹⁵ Eugene Kraybill, 'Noel Vose: An Anabaptist Sympathizer Heads World Baptists', *Festival Quarterly* (Winter 1987), pp. 19–20, 29–31 (p. 29).

⁹⁶ G. Noel Vose, *Focus on Faith: A Glimpse of Baptist Roots* (The Clifford Press, n.d.). Richard Moore estimates the work was written and published towards the end of 1985. Moore, *Noel Vose: Pastor, Principal, President*, p. 289. Ken Manley, *Who are the Baptists?* (The Clifford Press, 1988). Manley was by then Principal of Whitley College, the Baptist Theological College of Victoria. Clifford Press was the federal Australian Baptist publication arm based in Sydney.

historians, it is not surprising they provided an historic overview of the origins of Baptists followed by a series of theological emphases that defined Baptist identity. Vose and Manley continued to present their understanding of the influence of Anabaptists on Baptist origins as outlined in the above section on Baptist Origins. They presented summaries of Baptist identity that were acceptable to the various State Baptist Unions of that time. There is no hint in either of these publications of the identity tsunami being experienced among Southern Baptists.

However, Manley was very aware of issues that challenged Baptist identity, and after 1974, through his column 'Despatch' in *The Australian Baptist*, very consciously engaged his fellow Australian Baptists in the debates going on in the Southern Baptist Convention. He notes that the 'inerrancy' debate in Australia preceded the Southern Baptist Debate, as it occupied Australian Baptists in the 1960s, and re-emerged at the NSW Baptist Assembly in 1974, leading to changes in the NSW Baptist Union doctrinal statement in 1979 that endorsed verbal inspiration as the 'official Baptist position'.⁹⁷ In 'Despatches' he opened discussion on evangelicals and social action as well as ordination of women, both contentious issues among Southern Baptists but also more broadly in the Baptist world. In 1975, he distinguished 'fundamentalists' from 'evangelicals' by suggesting evangelicals should be involved in social justice activism. While his stated motive was to convince 'Australian Baptists to remain true to all the fundamental evangelical beliefs but not to adopt the sectarian and extreme militancy of the fundamentalist', the consequence was to encourage the sectarian and militant attitudes of those who opposed him.

Another issue Manley identified that fed into the inerrancy debate was 'creation science'. In 1959–1960 the *Australian Baptist* published a series of eight articles based on the 'anti-evolution sermons of Southern Baptist W. Criswell', which gave fundamentalists another issue on which to challenge the moderates. This issue found space in the national and state Baptist newspapers as late as 1995.⁹⁸ Manley rightly

⁹⁷ Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, pp. 690–695.

⁹⁸ Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, pp. 699–701.

commented that for the inerrantists ‘the whole authority of the Bible is lost if the Genesis accounts are not taken literally’.⁹⁹

Manley noted the emergence of revived Reformed doctrine and the considerable importance of Sydney Anglicanism and Moore Theological College (Anglican) in the propagation of this theological system. However, he does not consider this group to have significantly modified Baptist identity, at least up to 2006 when he published his *magnus opus* on Australian Baptist history.¹⁰⁰ In 2018, a coalition of fundamentalists and Reformed Baptists utilised the definition of the family to introduce the topic of gender and homosexuality, which lead eventually to a fragmentation of the NSW Association of Baptist Churches and the formation of Open Baptists in 2024. Issues involved in this debate were not only related to gender and homosexuality but also included ordination of women and the autonomy of the local church vis-à-vis the authority of the Association. The contribution of Baptist pastors trained by Moore Theological College and college lecturers should not be underestimated in this development.

A final issue Manley identified as influencing Australian Baptist identity was ecumenism. This was not a major issue among Baptists in the USA. The seed bed of this tension between conservatives and moderates was the debate around Australian Baptists joining the World Council of Churches that dominated Australian Baptist Union assembly agendas from 1948 to 1962.¹⁰¹

Manley presented an abridged version of his 1997 paper ‘Shapers of our Australian Baptist Identity’ to the Melbourne BWA Congress in 2000. For Manley, Baptist identity generally, and Australian Baptist identity specifically, should be ‘evidenced by engagement in mission [...], affirm diversity, engage in the life of society, and ecumenical endeavours’. Using the idea of a biological taxonomy, Manley suggested Australian Baptists belong to the ‘family’ ‘evangelicals’, the ‘genus’ Baptist, and the ‘species’ ‘those types of Baptists where the family genes find expressions in response to different

⁹⁹ Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, p. 700.

¹⁰⁰ Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, p. 707.

¹⁰¹ Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, pp. 579–588.

geographical, cultural and political contexts'.¹⁰² His 'species' or 'types' of Australian Baptists were initially embodied in influential leaders, but he argued that by the 1960s the types became 'themes filtered through denominational structures and those who held positions of power'. He nominated five themes: Americanisation, fundamentalism, ecumenism, evangelicalism with social engagement, and charismatic renewal.

In 2002, Manley analysed the BWA dialogues with other denominations and identified five theological themes where Baptists differed from other denominations, asserting that these five themes could provide cohesion for a Baptist identity. Under the authority of God and the Lordship of Christ, Scripture as illuminated by the Holy Spirit is the determinative guide for understanding the gospel which shapes our understanding of the church as a community of believers. Response to the gospel and initiation into the church is expressed in baptism and leads to a life of mission in the world. All Christians are called into ministry, although there are some called into a ministry of leadership.¹⁰³ For Manley, the BWA priorities of 'reconciliation and unity through ecumenical dialogue' needed to be prioritised by Baptists in the twenty-first century.¹⁰⁴

Manley was not the only Baptist contributing to the discussion about Baptist identity at a global level. Frank Rees, Manley's successor as principal of Whitley College (Victoria) presented a paper to the Baptist Heritage and Identity Commission in 2003, and David Parker from Queensland presented three papers in 2013.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Graeme Chatfield, 'Ken R. Manley – An Australian Baptist Identity', an unpublished paper read to the BHS (Baptist Historical Society) Summer School and CBHH (Canadian Baptist Historical Society) Conference, Selly Oak, Birmingham, 16–19 July 2019, pp. 6–8.

¹⁰³ 'A Survey of Baptist World Alliance Conversations with Other Churches and Some Implications for Baptist Identity', BWA Joint meeting of Baptist Heritage and Identity Commission and the Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation Commission, Seville, 11 July 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Ken Manley, 'Forward into the New Century, 1995–2005', in *Baptists Together in Christ 1905–2005: A Hundred-Year History of the Baptist World Alliance*, ed. by Richard V. Pierard (Samford University Press, 2005), pp. 275–299.

¹⁰⁵ Frank Rees, 'Baptist Identity: Immersed Through Worship', presentation to the BWA Heritage and Identity Commission, 10 July 2003, Rio de Janeiro. David Parker, 'Identifying the Baptist DNA – Global Baptist Identity', and 'Mapping a 21st Century Global Baptist Identity, Part 2: Identifying the Baptist DNA', BWA Heritage and Identity Commission, 5 July 2012, Santiago, Chile.

While Australian Baptists were aware of the issues around Baptist identity before, during, and after the Southern Baptist fragmentation, any mention of Anabaptism is at best linked to the sixteenth and seventeenth century origins debate, otherwise it is incidental.

The Australian Experience: Anabaptist Influence

How did Australian Baptists experience the influence of Anabaptist ideas and how did they respond?

Until its closure at the end of 1991, *The Australian Baptist* newspaper provides ample opportunity to see what topics were generating discussion among Australian Baptists. Topics that included references to Anabaptists, Mennonites or Hutterites are numerous. Some discussions were generated by reviews of books authored by Mennonites, others from the context of current issues among Australian Baptists where Anabaptists were referenced in some way. These references from *The Australian Baptist* are grouped under the following headings: discipline, religious liberty, liberty of conscience/soul competency, social justice, ecumenism and cooperation, worship, communalism, suffering, ecclesiology, discipleship, baptism, church and state relations, peace and nonviolence, and women in ministry.

Ken Manley's review of *Disciplining the Brother* (1974) by Mennonite author M. Jeschke initiated a healthy discussion about the demise of discipline among Australian Baptist churches and the need to reconsider how discipline and forgiveness might be pursued without falling into the excesses of the Mennonite 'ban'.¹⁰⁶

Readers of *The Australian Baptist* had the issue of religious liberty brought to their attention from several different contexts. Robert Somerville, a US Baptist missionary in Paris at the time of paralysing strikes, challenged Baptists to be true to their origins and to speak out strongly for religious liberty, especially as it related to issues of peace,

¹⁰⁶ See Ken Manley, 'Despatch: Church Discipline Today', *The Australian Baptist*, 4 December 1972, p. 7 for the start of the discussion. Discussion concluded with Ken Manley, 'Despatch: Discipline and Forgiveness', *The Australian Baptist*, 15 January 1976, p. 5.

racism, and societal evils.¹⁰⁷ Heather Vose's BWA report 'Our Baptist Heritage — Christian Citizenship and Church-State Relations' received coverage, as did William Stephen's 'Baptist Distinctives: Liberty of Conscience'. The final editor of *The Australian Baptist*, Peter Green, presented the readership with his interpretation of Walter Shurden's *Four Fragile Freedoms*.¹⁰⁸

When social justice was discussed, Australian Baptist David Nicholas was 'not impressed' with Mennonite Myron Augsburger's *Faith for a Secular World* (1968).¹⁰⁹ Social justice slipped out of view until Ronald Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* stirred up heated debate, and his invitation to speak in both Victoria and New South Wales raised the intensity of exchanges.¹¹⁰

In 1990 there was an interesting exchange between two younger Baptists. One represented the Australian Student Christian Movement (ASCM). He noted with approval that the ASCM lacked a doctrinal statement which stressed the freedom of the individual to interpret Scripture, echoing Shurden's focus on freedom. He asserted that Bible study led the group to act on the biblical imperative for justice. As a Baptist he cited his Anabaptist forefathers in support of his views. The other young Baptist was a Moore Theological College graduate. He rejected the ASCM claim to champion 'liberty of conscience' and 'Social justice' just because they waved these 'banners'. He also objected to the appeal that Anabaptists are the Baptists forebears, stating, 'Of the mythology built up around Anabaptists there is much that is spurious, and in the history of the movement there is more that is abhorrent.' This statement echoed the continuation in the twentieth century of the

¹⁰⁷ Robert Somerville, *The Australian Baptist*, June 1968, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Heather Vose, 'Our Baptist Heritage — Christian Citizenship and Church-State Relations', delivered at the Study Commission of the BWA, reported in *The Australian Baptist*, 17 August 1988, pp. 9–12 (p. 9); William Stephens, 'Baptist Distinctives. Liberty of Conscience', *The Australian Baptist*, 28 June 1989, p. 8; Peter Green, 'Distinctly Baptist', *The Australian Baptist*, August 1990, pp. 3–4.

¹⁰⁹ David Nicholas, 'Titles that Demand Attention', *The Australian Baptist*, 11 March 1970, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ On the Sider debates see *The Australian Baptist*, 29 June, 1983; 5 October, 1983; 8 February, 1984; 19 March, 1986, p. 12.

sixteenth-century Reformed condemnation of Anabaptism.¹¹¹ The Anabaptist–Calvinist struggles identified by Bebbington and Patterson among Baptists in the USA were present in Australia and underpinned one of the conservative Baptist groupings in Australia.

Ecumenism expressed through cooperative projects featured positively in *The Australian Baptist*. This was especially the case when reporting BWA and Mennonite Central Committee cooperation in producing Bibles and the Russian translation and distribution of the full set of Barclay's commentaries.¹¹² The BWA Baptist–Mennonite Dialogue received positive coverage, anticipating ongoing cooperation between Baptists and Mennonites,¹¹³ as did a Bible translation workshop held at Rüsçhlikon where the keynote speaker was Mennonite Walter Sawatsky.¹¹⁴ An older, negative reaction to organic union ecumenism was referred to in an article by J. K. Zeman, a Canadian Baptist. He claimed Canadian Baptists were losing their identity with their 'middle class outlook' that reflected the attitudes of among others the United Church. What they needed to do was be more like the Disciples (Churches of Christ) and Mennonites.¹¹⁵ This warning was presented in the context of Vatican II and the Roman Catholic courting of denominations to accept Roman primacy.

Much ink was used and angst expressed in discussions about ecclesiology and its sub-set themes discipleship, baptism, church and state relations, women in ministry, suffering, and worship. The most immediate influence of Anabaptist ideals regarded discipleship. Representing both a European view and an Australian Baptist understanding of discipleship was Thorwald Lorenzen, graduate of the

¹¹¹ Tim Conner, 'The Student Christian Movement', *The Australian Baptist*, October 1990, p. 16; David Starling, 'SCM: Champagne Socialists?', *The Australian Baptist*, November 1990, p. 10.

¹¹² 'Russian Baptists Confer', *The Australian Baptist*, January 23, 1980, pp. 1–2 (p. 1).

¹¹³ BWA–Mennonite World Conference Dialogue is mentioned in 'Decisions taken by the BWA Executive Last Month', *The Australian Baptist*, 8 June 1988, p. 7; Baptists and Mennonites in Historic Meet', *The Australian Baptist*, November 1991, p. 23. However, a change in BWA leadership saw a change of focus on BWA priorities and no organised follow-up from this Baptist–Mennonite Dialogue eventuated. This claim was confirmed in personal correspondence with the author by both Tony Cupit and J. D. Roth.

¹¹⁴ 'Workshop at Rüsçhlikon', *The Australian Baptist*, 22 June 1988, p. 20.

¹¹⁵ J. K. Zeman, 'Canadian Baptists Losing Identity in Ecumenism', *The Australian Baptist*, 30 August 1967, p. 3.

NSW Baptist Theological College and lecturer in theology at IBTS, Rüşlikon. Lorenzen returned to his alma mater in 1978 as a visiting lecturer, presenting a paper on ‘Anabaptists and Discipleship’. That same year, the principal of the Queensland Baptist College in his presidential address to the Queensland Baptist Union used the Anabaptist understanding of discipleship (*Nachfolge*) to encourage Queensland Baptists to engage in witness and in life transforming obedience to Jesus.¹¹⁶ In 1995, Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Church* began to impact Australian Baptists’ understanding of discipleship. What they probably did not realise was the extent to which the principles being promoted were based on sixteenth-century Anabaptist principles.¹¹⁷

The theme of separation of church and state was included in Hugh Osborne’s series ‘I will build my Church’, where he supported the Anabaptist interpretation of the fall of the church brought about when Constantine married church and state. He went so far as to claim ‘that nearly every one of the constructive principles of the Anabaptist got written into the Constitution of the United States’.¹¹⁸ One principle of the Anabaptists, the essential nature of the church as a ‘suffering’ church did not resonate strongly with Australian Baptists.¹¹⁹

Peace and non-resistance as major identifying themes of Anabaptist life did find a place among contributors to *The Australian Baptist*. Ken Manley returned to this theme in several of his ‘Despatch’ columns.¹²⁰ Letters to the editor demonstrated that the debate about just

¹¹⁶ Thorwald Lorenzen, ‘Discipleship – the Central Affirmation of Anabaptist Theology as a Challenger for Christian Life Today’, *The Australian Baptist*, 28 June 1978, p. 16 and 1 November 1978, p. 5. E. G. Gibson, ‘Our Vision of God’, *The Australian Baptist*, 19 September 1979, pp. 7–12 (p. 10); Albert Dube, ‘Disciplined Discipleship’, *The Australian Baptist*, 19 September 1979, pp. 5–10.

¹¹⁷ Rick Warren, ‘The Anabaptists and the Great Commission: The Effect of the Radical Reformation on Church Planting’, in *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists*, ed. by Malcolm Yarnell, pp. 83–97.

¹¹⁸ Hugh Osborne, ‘I Will Build My Church (6), Reformers Re-Build (2)’, *The Australian Baptist*, 12 October 1988, 10–11, 13 (p. 13).

¹¹⁹ Noel Vose, ‘Our Anabaptist Heritage – No. 10’, *The Australian Baptist*, 28 November 1979, p. 10.

¹²⁰ Ken Manley, ‘Despatch – Non-Violence of Jesus’, *The Australian Baptist*, 16 November 1977, p. 11; Ken Manley, ‘Despatch – Baptists and Peace’, *The Australian Baptist*, 19 March 1986, p. 10.

war theories resonated among non-academic Baptists.¹²¹ Arnold Sider reappeared in debates with Baptists citing his *A Call for Evangelical Nonviolence*.¹²² Further study is required to test whether the number of Australian Baptists supporting a non-violence theology grew from the 1960s and 70s to the 1990s and beyond.

Communalism, or the search for community, appeared in a column by Miss D. M. Clack where she expressed that she was 'horrified' that there were Christians wanting to withdraw from society and abrogate their obligations as citizens. The Hutterites and Amish were portrayed as the horrific consequence of such an attitude.¹²³ Albert McClellan added that stagnation for evangelism resulted from retreating from the world.¹²⁴ Contrasting these views were those of Vose, who viewed positively the Anabaptist ideal of community. He included community in his list of things Baptists can learn from Anabaptists.¹²⁵ Peter Green reviewed *Australian Christian Communities*, noting the significant Baptist leadership in this movement and the Anabaptist heritage it reflected.¹²⁶ Ken Manley noted there were about 180 of these Radical Discipleship communities in Australia in 1987, but numerically as a total of the Australian population, they were very small.¹²⁷

Australian authors were exploring several of these themes. Possibly the most influential was Michael Frost and his promotion of the 'missional church' model. While there is evidence of Frost and Alan Hirsch reading Anabaptist and Radical Discipleship literature, their model drew on an extensive range of authors and ideas.¹²⁸

As in the UK, an Anabaptist Network was established in Australia: The Association of Anabaptists of Australia and New Zealand

¹²¹ Gillian R. Hazleton, 'Nuclear War', *The Australian Baptist*, 8 January 1986, p. 4.

¹²² Belinda Groves, 'Australia the Arms Dealer', *The Australian Baptist*, July 1991, p. 19.

¹²³ D. M. Clack, 'View Points', *The Australian Baptist*, 3 March 1971, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Albert McClellan, 'The People of God: Always a Movement', *The Australian Baptist*, 15 November 1978, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Noel Vose, 'Our Anabaptist Heritage – No. 10', p. 10.

¹²⁶ Peter Green, 'Book Review: *Australian Christian Communities*', *The Australian Baptist*, April 1991, p. 18.

¹²⁷ Ken Manley, *Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, p. 684.

¹²⁸ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things To Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Hendrickson, 2003).

(AAANZ). Never large in numbers, it continues to seek to promote the new Anabaptist vision. It maintains links to the Anabaptist Network in the UK through its relationship with Stuart Murray, and with the World Mennonite Centre through the Mennonite missionaries to Australia Mark and Mary Hurst. One member of the AAANZ sponsored a well-attended conference held at Morling College which focused on Darrin Belousek's *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*. The conference papers were presented in a special edition of the *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* May 2015.¹²⁹

While Baptists in Australia were becoming more aware of radical discipleship in the later decades of the twentieth century, it would be fair to say that the influence on the majority of Australian Baptists was minimal. Victorian Baptists, through their association with IBTS, proved more open to incorporating a broader range of Anabaptist ideals than Sydney or Brisbane Baptists, who remained focused on mission and evangelism, though it could be argued that Baptist World Aid Australia with its association to BWA incorporated more of the Anabaptist approach to social justice and relief aid than other Australian Baptist organisations.

A change of leadership and emphases within an ecclesial institution often sees the demise of the preceding leadership's agenda. Such has been the case of Anabaptist advocacy among Baptists in Australia. For example, the influence and advocacy of Anabaptist ideals by Noel Vose in Western Australia greatly diminished following his retirement and with a restructuring and change of leadership style of the Baptist Union of Western Australia that has flowed on into the Australian Baptist Ministries.

Conclusion

Were Australian Baptists aware of the debates about Anabaptist contributions to Baptist origins? Absolutely. Did it impact their Baptist

¹²⁹ Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Eerdmans, 2012). Papers relating to The Morling Conference on Atonement Theology, May 2014, *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research*, 10.1 (May 2015).

identity? Not to any great degree. Australian Baptists were happy enough to refer to various Anabaptists as exemplars of perseverance under persecution, often thinking of these Anabaptists as another branch of the Baptist family tree. Anabaptists may have been considered a bit strange in the way they lived out being church, but there were some family characteristics Australian Baptists shared with them, and we need not be ashamed of the association. At times a minority of Australian Baptists would become passionate about a particular Anabaptist ideal and incorporate that ideal into their identity. However, the institutional structures of State and Australian Baptist Unions did not incorporate Anabaptist ideals into the formal statements that defined their identity. Rather, pursuing the ideal of ‘unity in diversity’, those Baptists who were influenced by Anabaptist ideals were allowed to form their own sub-groups within the broader Baptist family, just like charismatics, renewal groups, fundamentalist groups, and Calvinistic reformed groups.

The majority of Australian Baptists overall remain a pragmatic people, maintaining a broad ‘evangelical’ unity so that ‘together we can achieve more than we could achieve separately’.