

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

Supplement # 6

Anabaptism More Than Protestantism

*From a message by James Burkholder
Given at New England Valley Mennonite Church
November 30, 2008.*

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate
saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;
and I will receive you,
And will be a Father unto you,
and ye shall be my sons and daughters,
saith the Lord Almighty.
2 Corinthians 6:17-18*

www.anabaptistmennonites.org For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

Foreword.

Whilst the early Anabaptists could be said to have been protesting at the condition of the State Church, which was one of apostasy and unscriptural practises, it is not correct to term them Protestants as other groups were that were formed during those years of reformation in reaction to the corruption that was evident in the State Church and still called so today is doing them a disservice.

The speaker of this message brings out that the early Anabaptists believed the message of the Scripture in its entirety and lived it. That is what put them in conflict with the State church of that time and today in 2011 what we as Conservative Anabaptist Mennonites believe and the way we carry that out in practise is still in conflict with much of professed Christianity.

May this message be an encouragement to all of us to examine our beliefs and practises in light of the Scripture and as lived by those in the 1500's and 1600's who often lost all they had including their lives because of their steadfastness to the teachings of Scripture and the call of Jesus Christ to "come out from among them and be ye separate"

JvL.

In recent years I have been sharing some messages that were shared earlier, I could say I am re-preaching them, and especially as I think of the fact that there is a new generation growing up all the time, the message that I have this morning was preached 15 years ago and I had to think what the congregation looked like at that point and the fact that all our teenagers would not remember back that far basically as to what has been taught.

But we are thankful that the Word of God lives on, we realise that time goes on and we are glad that we can share. I sometimes feel that maybe it is not appropriate to share something from years ago but on the other hand I find a blessing in re-studying subject and hopefully it can be a blessing to all as we hear the word.

The message title this morning comes from the little booklet "More Than Protestantism" and that will be the message title and I am not sure how many of you have this booklet, I'm not sure if it is available any more, it is a Rod and Staff publication and really does bring into focus what is happening in our history, we appreciate our Mennonite heritage and history and being a part of the plain people and how that is a blessing to us. The Psalmist does say the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage. And we can all say that whether we are older or whether we are younger we are part of that goodly heritage and not only by birth.

Maybe most of us in a sense become part of it by birth but it is also very important to remember that it is a personal decision to be a part of that heritage, we are not just automatically a Mennonite or automatically part of the plain people or automatically a child of God but it relates to our choices and the wonderful thing about that is that the door is open for anyone to become part of this heritage, it is not just for those born into the Mennonite circle. Sometimes those outside cannot understand that and they think it is just for those born in our circles but we must quickly help them to see that No, it is more than that, the Gospel of course is for everyone and to be heirs of the plain church teachings and practice is certainly something that everyone can attain to regardless where they are in the world, when the witness is there the potential is there.

Turn with me to first Corinthians 3, we will use this as the text.

This is what we sometimes think of as the Anabaptist or Mennonite or Menno Simons' verse. First Corinthians 3, the whole chapter is interesting it is not church building but many times in the writings of Menno Simons he would go back to this verse and if you study him in history this verse comes into focus because he used it many times.

1 Corinthians 3:11:

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

He goes on to say about building on that foundation.

Now our foundation we sometimes say, and this morning's message looks at our foundational roots and we are thinking of the Mennonite emphasis and our separation from the world and all that, and sometimes people begin to think that is the basis, but you know that the actual cornerstone is Jesus Christ and the rest is part of that foundation, just like when you build a house you must start with a big rock and the concrete and the stone and all that underneath it and then the foundation continues perhaps on top of that and those basement walls but it is based on something solid underneath.

That is how it is in verse 11: For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

We are going to look at some of the other church groups briefly, we could say denominations, but we must always remember that the final test in verse 11 here that our foundation must be based on Jesus Christ and of course His work and how that works in our own lives.

First part of the message will be: Understanding the terms.

There are a number of terms that we are using here that we take for granted that we understand but we will just walk through these and notice again what they mean.

1] The term: Anabaptist.

We are familiar with that but what does it really mean? Well it simply means to be re-baptised – "Ana" being a prefix which means again. So they were called "again baptisers" and history tells us it was not they themselves that gave themselves that name but rather it was something that the people around them used and in many times it was sort of a derogatory term because of what they stood for.

So in the early 1500s there was only one mainline church it was the large and powerful and the extremely corrupt Roman Catholic Church in the year 1500, but even before that for hundreds of years, and it was in that setting that the Anabaptist church was born.

You see the Anabaptist date as what? Who can tell me the birth of the Anabaptist church what year was it? 1525 – that's right and it is good that we understand and remember that year in history.

So this was something that was happening in that time and as we said the Roman Catholic Church was unspeakably corrupt but there was no one to challenge it until Luther came along, we will look at that briefly, but just to emphasise the corruptness of it and how sinful that setting was you wonder how people could put up with something like this but they had the sale of indulgences where the Catholic officials would go from town to town and they would sell for a price the privilege, if you could call it a privilege, the privilege to sin. So for a lot of money that you paid to the official you could go and sin and live like you wanted to and indulge in lustful things.

And that's the way it was and it seemed nobody challenged it in the many years and centuries and you can understand how that would immediately deteriorate tremendously to have something like that happening, it really cheapens the Gospel.

So that is the setting that the Anabaptist name comes into focus, so that is the first term we are looking at.

2] The second term: Reformation and the reformers.

The reformation came over a period of years but back in that same cradle we would say that time of the 1500's, in 1517 Martin Luther openly protested the Catholic system and this was the beginning of the

Reformation period. As we said up to this point everything was unchallenged, it was very low, very sinful and that's just the way it was but as time went on Luther took the courage in 1517, that's a few years before the Anabaptist year, it took courage to put the 95 theses on the church bulletin board, church door, that was the practice at that time that the door of the church would on the outside serve as the bulletin board they could put announcements on there and that type of thing.

So Martin Luther being a Roman official tacked on the 95 theses or 95 statements against the Roman Catholic Church and immediately that ignited the whole thing because people began to see and start to think and of course the Catholic Church was very much against this and it wasn't long till there was a price on his head for taking such an approach.

So the word reformation simply means to reform and something was happening to the political system that time, it was a reforming taking place, a reformation was taking place.

3] Now the term that we are looking at more directly this morning is the term: Protestant. We have it in our title; More than Protestantism.

The term Protestant first came into usage in Germany in 1529 just a few years after the Anabaptist date and at the Diet of Speers, this was a church council held by the Catholics at that time, when at the Diet of Speers the majority ruled to allow Catholic teaching in the Lutheran States but not the other way around, i.e. Lutheran teachings in the Catholic States, in other words that council ruled against Luther going ahead with his program, it clipped his wings you could say with what they did there, they ruled to allow Catholic teaching in the Lutheran States but not the other way around, Lutheran teaching in the Catholic States.

So Luther reacted to this and he, as a result was referred to as one that protested, he and his princes protested, they made a formal protest and thereby were ready to start something new, something different because they did not agree with the Catholics and therefore were referred to as Protestants.

4] Now the question is: Are we Protestants today?

I remember as a schoolboy going to the Lincoln public school the first few years and one of those grades, first day at school we had to fill out a

form, family names and so on and in one place it said religion and we had two, Catholic or Protestant and that had me stalled, I didn't know what to write there and thought well we are not Catholics so we must be Protestant.

Well that was perhaps all right as an answer for a schoolboy but what we are looking at is more than Protestantism so if anyone raises that question: Are you Protestant? Why you would probably have to answer more than just yes or no, we have to give an explanation and that is that we would agree that we are not part of the Catholic Church but we would also not agree with much of the Protestantism, this booklet that I mentioned "More Than Protestantism" brings that out.

So these were dangerous times and this was a time of Protestantism beginning to take its roots and it was a time when the whole of Europe we could say was in turmoil or at a loss as many of the nations were and it was a time when God was also working we believe.

So when you think of the term Protestant churches you probably think of a number of different ones such as the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, the Baptists and I'm sure the list could go on and on. As we view them they are all pretty much all in one group – those are Protestant churches.

We have to go back to the Anabaptist base and another little booklet that should be in our homes "The Anabaptist Vision" which shows that truly what we believe is more than Protestantism.

5] Now another term that has been used more recently is the term: Fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism has its roots back around the turn of the century back in the early 1900's and if you go back into the late 1800's there is a time of tremendous liberality, that was a time when the English language Bible version started to come into focus, it was a time when there was a lot of doubting of the basic doctrines, I'm talking now about the late 1800's early 1900's, the denial of the basic doctrines within the Protestant group and there was a Liberal swing taking place.

No longer did many of these, we could say of these Protestant churchgoing people, no longer did many of them believe in the creation accounts for instance or in the infallibility of the Word of God or the virgin birth or the blood atonement and it was a time as I said where the modern versions started to shape and take their place so we don't fit in with that term either – the term fundamentalism doesn't describe our people and our concepts. In fact it is interesting that it was influential on the Mennonite church back in that time, history tells us that in 1910 to 1915 the reformed churches some that I referred to those that were now fundamentalists Daniel Kauffman in his book “The Encyclopaedia Dictionary” says: “The Mennonite church is firmly committed to the fundamentalist faith.”

But we don't believe it quite like that, there are some things that are alike, and we need to be careful in this area because we believe in creation for instance and we rejoice to see the ground that has been gained by organisations that emphasise creation but we are still not like them in a lot of ways. Or those that emphasise the virgin birth we believe that too but we are not quite like those people. And I think Kauffman; perhaps a little more time proved that maybe he wasn't quite right in that the Mennonite church is firmly committed to the fundamentalist faith.

Could we say the Mennonite church is firmly committed to the Institute for Creation Research? Well we appreciate what they do but we are not committed to all that they believe or teach.

Another area that I'm referring to that is missing in this area of fundamentalism are some of the distinctive doctrines we know and appreciate.

The fundamentalists may emphasise a number of doctrines but they do not say anything about separation from the world and non-resistance to evil and the separation of church and state, we feel that we should not vote and so on, they rather emphasise that we should get involved.

So it is good to remember that we do not necessarily fit in with these things and we don't want to get to overly enthused with the work in creationism and so on, we can appreciate it but we are still not a part of it and we need to know where to draw some of those lines.

Now that we have looked a bit at understanding the terms I'm going on to understanding what we really believe and then emphasise some of these unique doctrines and practices of the Anabaptist people.

I have three of them here and depending on how you group them you can have more or less perhaps, but it pretty well runs parallel with Harold Bender's book on "The Anabaptist Vision" and we are looking now at understanding what we really believe and what I have to share and what I shared so far in relation to the Protestants, the fundamentalists and so on we are not here to undermine them or to degrade them, we can respect them for the beliefs that they do have but we are sharing a number of things here which should help us to understand that there is a line drawn there.

1] And the first point under understanding what we really believe is that: True Christianity is a Discipleship.

Let's go over to Luke 14. We have looked at many scriptures except our text there and this passage is right from the words of Jesus, the mouth of Jesus and He makes it very, very definite and we believe this. I think there are a lot of church people you know who know all about church but don't really know what Jesus said, they are not taught passages like this in Luke 14: 25 "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,"

You understand the setting here, people were following Him for various reasons, most of them were following for self interest reasons, the loaves and fishes, the miracles and in a setting like that Jesus had to sort them out and with this statement He just sorted them into two groups that is what He is doing here.

Verse 25: "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, ²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." [Luke 14:25-27](#)

Now Jesus is teaching a doctrine there that touches the whole New Testament and perhaps the Old Testament and He is sorting people out and till it was all done, He looked at His disciples and said: Will you go away also? (John 6:67). So that was a real combing and shaking down experience here.

The Christian life or Christianity is a discipleship, that is what we are emphasising here, strict adherence to the teachings of the New Testament of Jesus, we believe in the literal interpretation of Jesus and the apostles and we believe that we are obligated to that.

I think with many who go to church they see the Gospel on things like this as we would view a cafeteria, a large place where were you go down the aisle and where you pick out what you want, no one expects that you take the whole thing at a cafeteria. Or think of it perhaps as a reunion or family gathering where all the dishes are in a row, there is more there than you can handle so you have to make some decisions.

So which way is our church life? Is it like that where you take a little of this and a little of that? No, the Scriptures make it clear that we take the whole thing, that is what Jesus is saying here in Luke 14. We take the whole thing, and sometimes it is referred to, I think this book uses the term "radical discipleship" it is not just being a casual churchgoer but it is a radical discipleship in the sense that it must affect the whole life.

So when we follow Christ this way it affects the whole of life and it affects everything that we do or say.

Zwingli back at this time said: "We will wait and see what the city council says about the mass after they have discussed the matter awhile." He said let's go and see what they will say? And remember old faithful Simon Stumpf stood up and said: "Master Zwingli the scriptures already have decided this, we cannot take it to the city council."

And that is the way we believe, that is what we embrace and that is what we endeavour to live.

So we are looking at Holiness of life, this all comes in here, not only under the idea of a discipleship but Holiness of life and purity of the church and the voluntary church concept where each of us decides to

become part of it and decides to stay a part of it. Maybe sometimes we forget that part of it but it is a constant ongoing choice, every time there is a discipline (church standards) review there is in a sense of a choice to make again, or every time there is a clarification given do we really want to be part of this church or don't we? So it is all part of discipleship and it goes back to verses like what we looked at there in Luke.

We are looking at understanding what we really believe – that is number one: Christianity is a discipleship.

2] Secondly we believe in strict adherence to New Testament teaching on love, peace and non-resistance.

And we can go to scriptures perhaps I won't take time for it, Jesus in [Matthew 5](#) and Paul in [Romans 12](#) and many others where the emphasis is on love, peace and I guess we could say the Mennonite term non-resistance, I don't think you will find that term in the Bible but it is based on what Jesus said when He says: "Resist not evil." ([Matthew 5:39](#)) And we use the term non-resistance to fit in there and to put that into doctrine form and the New Testament is so strong that especially it all zeros onto Christ's example where on the cross He said: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." ([Luke 23:24](#)).

That was the supreme expression of non-resistance where after all that beating and torture and finally they are martyring Him on the cross and He came out with such loving words – Forgive them for they know not what they do.

So there are many verses and many instances in history that fit into this.

The Martyrs Mirror for instance is a huge volume of accounts where this took place and there was non-resistance and love and peace even when they were being tortured and martyred.

You have the account of Dirk Willems, you see the picture or the engraving they made of him and you know the story how he came back to save his captor on the ice and as a result was burnt at the stake I believe some days later.

And the “love your enemies” emphasis of Jesus and one could just go on and on, it is a whole doctrine and a whole teaching from the New Testament.

And isn't it interesting that all these churches that we referred to, and I listed a number of them, we talked about the fundamentalists and the Protestants and all of these, yet it seems to be left to the Anabaptists to see this doctrine and to believe it and to practice it.

I think the difference is, the only difference is because we believe in a literal application of the teachings and not something like we said you just take what you want but it is all for us. It involves also military service, it does even though it is much beyond that, sometimes when we think of non-resistance we think of exemption from military duties but it is much more than that and it is these things that I have referred to such as “like a lamb to the slaughter”. This is an area we are not tested in as much as they were but yet there is constant testings that we face and it is important that we indoctrinate our children and young people in a very definite way because this doctrine of non-resistance is certainly under fire and it is easy to lose it.

The question is raised sometimes and I know I've used this illustration a number of times here and that is; How can two countries fight against each other when both of them consider themselves to be Christian and how can they go to war? That was the big issue that in the Anabaptist time. You know the Catholic church and the Protestant churches they used the sword to keep people in line and they went against each other to fight, there was the 30 years war between the Catholics and the Protestants and they were both Bible believing people, both groups of Christians in their own mind and the question is: How can this be?

This illustration is from a Mrs Lind who lived in the house we live in now, some years ago visiting her in that house we just encouraged her to come over here to church but she never did except for maybe Sister Regina's funeral, anyway she said back in Germany before she came over and she still had a very heavy German emphasis in speech, she said she asked her father or her Minister how this can be that Christians are fighting

on both sides, and they both prayed to the same God that He would help them you know to wipe out the enemy, how can this be? It doesn't make sense she said. And her Minister was not able to answer that question he just left it with her he could not answer it himself and she said; At that point I decided that this Christianity thing is nothing if it can be this and there is no answer.

So she treated it as nothing and she did just that, she never got back, she said she never went to church ever since that time.

Well if only we could have been there for some Bible teaching, if we could have been there to tell her and to tell the Minister there is an answer and the answer is very simple it is in the non-resistance stand and the answer is that both of those sides were wrong and only through non-resistance can you get through times like that.

So there she was outside of church life because of stumbling over that which has such an easy answer we could say in [Romans 12](#) and [Matthew 5](#) and scriptures like that.

3] Now the third concept that we want to understand is that: The true church is a brotherhood.

The true church is a brotherhood. Now if you have those three that we looked at it, they pretty well rounded off the distinctive Anabaptist doctrine and this is another one, not just a casual “be you warmed and filled by brethren” but an actual sacrificial sharing within the brotherhood.

Now the offering that was just announced would be a splendid example of this and we are glad that we not only talk about brotherhood assistance but that perhaps the biggest test is still ahead for us in the financial as the economy tightens up what is that going to do to our offerings? It is still something to think about but we are so glad that the true church is still alive today and that we can be a part of it if we surrender to it and we can be the reapers and the beneficiaries of the true church as a brotherhood.

Just reading from this “Anabaptist Vision” a little bit to point out the setting, it tells us that among the Hutterites someone noticed this in relation to applicants for baptism whether they would consecrate themselves with all their temporal possessions to the service of God and His people. That

question was asked at a Hutterite baptism and it is interesting how they were ready to take that as part of their baptismal vow.

Another quote here: "True Christians neither wear a sword or engage in war since among them taking life had ceased entirely for we are no longer under the old covenant."

I believe that fits more with previous point but there is more here in the emphasis on brotherhood assistance.

And the question is did the Mennonites really live this way and the Anabaptists?

They certainly did and that little booklet gives more illustrations of that and we need to keep emphasising this concept of brotherhood assistance and brotherly love, it is all part of the voluntary church life, we are here by choice and we surrender to each other. One of the biggest things that people face to come to us from of other church backgrounds is the ability to fit in with and let the church decide what we should do.

On thinking of one family in the Bahamas that we are working with how they are now at that stage that they appreciate our church life immensely but all these years they have been getting to where they were in scriptural teaching on their own and now to let the church lead them is a very difficult thing and the father continues to emphasise these are my convictions, we must do my convictions right?

Can we say: Well convictions are important and convictions are personal but we need something deeper than that that binds us together and that is our accountability to our brethren because I am not safe alone, informed convictions that are not scriptural will need the church to balance us off and to help us to work together.

So these are concepts you don't find in the nominal churches that we find in any Anabaptist record.

And now the third one will be understanding how we might be influenced by Protestantism.

And we are looking now at some things that we can appreciate about the Protestant movements and those people but at the same time there are some negatives that we need to be aware of.

1] So the first is that not all Protestant influence has been negative.

I just want to point that out that we profit immensely from the songbook right in our racks (Mennonite Church Hymnal), if you look through it is mostly Protestant writers and composers, you have names I'm guessing that would all fit in the Protestant category, names like Wesley and Watts and Fanny Crosby and Mason and Sankey and Bliss and Whitfield, they are all in the Protestant circles, it is amazing that we use so many of their songs.

And we also have the Christian Hymnary where we have Anabaptist songs that are definitely emphasised in that book we can appreciate that, but it seems that the songs that we have learned and grew up with and they are precious to us today.

One other point I wanted yet to mention briefly and that is that the tendency is to be satisfied with a church that does not require Holiness in every area in every member.

2] Going onto a second point.

We believe in the voluntary church life which we emphasised earlier and we are glad that we can be part of that.

Now we are looking at some of these influences that come and that is thinking that unity in church life is of prime importance.

I think in our church there is an emphasis going back to unity, sometimes it is a Congregational vote whatever it might be, congregations straying away from a biblical foundation because they want to emphasise unity.

You remember the John Oberholtzer division, this is back in the middle 1800's, the General Conference was started by John Oberholtzer and his motto, his emphasis was: "Unity in essentials, tolerance in non-essentials and charity in all things."

It sounded quite well to many people; "Unity in essentials, tolerance in non-essentials" and the question is: What are non-essentials? He was one that emphasised that we do not need the plain clothes and that type of thing and as a result it deteriorated very fast.

So that is not quite a true statement that we want to emphasise: Unity in essentials, tolerance in nonessentials, charity in all things. Yes in one sense but when you really get down to it that doesn't hold up. So we need to emphasise the purity of the church first and then the unity.

Let's go back to the book of James and pick up that verse in chapter 3 when he explains this very clearly, the wisdom that is from above which would refer to the spiritual things in the spiritual world

James 3:17:

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

These are many things that are good but always keep in mind the wisdom that is from above is not first peaceable but it is first pure. So the most important thing is to have a pure church life and pure hearts before God.

Secondly we want to be and we must be unified and peaceable and working together but it must always be in that order and I think that order is many times reversed in your more liberal settings.

Another influence is the tendency to overuse the doctrines of assurance of salvation.

This is something used quite extensively in Protestant settings where individual members might give a great testimony for the way that the Lord is leading them and they are going to heaven you know, but at the same time their very looks and speech and all that you have doesn't fit and we need to be careful about that influence of the "once saved always saved" emphasis and the overuse of assurance of salvation because the Bible teaches that it is possible to lose one's salvation and whilst we can talk about our assurance in heaven we could certainly not boast about it and we must remember that we are still in this body and we still are not totally saved so we should not talk like we are totally saved and there is no losing out but rather we should understand because we still live in these physical bodies we can still sin and these physical bodies can still keep us out of heaven.

That is a very sobering thought is it not?

Well let's be careful about that influence that basically boils down to "once saved always saved" emphasis.

Another influence is the pietistic tendencies.

Many Protestants emphasise a personal relationship with Christ, the Holy Spirit told me to do this and the Lord directed me into this.

Well there is a measure of where that is true but how can we determine whether it is the Holy Spirit telling me or whether it is my own spirit within? And that is where we need the brotherhood to help sort that out otherwise we would probably run off the track. Because there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. [Proverbs 16:25](#).

So if we follow what seems right, I'm trying to follow the Bible we say, it seems like this is what he (the spirit) is telling me but the end of it is going to be death if it is our own lustful nature that is wanting this or desiring that.

So the pietistic tendencies are the idea of various people that the Spirit tells me what to do. Our emphasis, the Anabaptist emphasis is rather in contrast to that and we say like He says to each of the seven churches: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

And we believe that is finally what it boils down to; We find our direction yes through the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God but only as it is coupled with the conviction of the church and the teaching of the church. Any man that hath an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches refers to the group voice.

Another influence is the salaried Ministry.

Perhaps we don't think of this too often but that is a very definite part of the Protestant churches, the salaried Ministry and how they will hire a minister and if they can't give him enough money it is understood he will probably go off to another church where he can get more money and the whole thing is moved by the monetary and Jesus says the hireling fleeth. [\(John 10:13\)](#). The hireling is the hired man and in those settings the preachers and the teachers are the hired men instead of giving themselves fully to the work they are hired for it and Jesus says the hireling fleeth but the good Shepherd remains.

That is a challenge for our church leaders, and deacons, ministers, bishops, that they would do just that, stand firm on truth and stay there and be there even when the wolf comes so to speak.

So I am glad for what we sometimes call an un-shackled ministry. The salaried minister is oftentimes shackled because of the money situation and he doesn't do what is right because of the money, that can easily happen.

Another line that we are all interested in would be the influence in songs that we do have.

We talked about the song writers that we appreciate but keep in mind that sometimes that writings are not truly in tune with the way we would believe it and often times it depends on how you interpret them how you apply them.

For instance the song "Rock of Ages cleft for me" was written by the Protestants and a Calvinist in fact and he says: "Not the labour of my hands can fulfil the law's demands; Could my tears for ever flow, could my zeal no respite know; All for sin could not atone, Thou alone must save."

Well it is interesting how both the Protestants and the Anabaptists both love this song and it is one of our favourite songs but we must look at it rightly and understand what we are saying and that is that we believe that there is a God's part to salvation, there is a work that He has done and we cannot do that, we can labour all the day and night to try and save ourselves but we cannot do it. Or we could cry all night, could my tears forever flow, that still would not work salvation for us but Christ provides salvation, that is where it stops for some people but for the Anabaptists there is another side. It is God's part and man's part and the two must work together, God's part and man's part, so when we sing that 'could my tears forever flow' we are thinking of; if I'm trying to do this to provide salvation it would be of no avail but the Scriptures do point out humility and the fear of the Lord and so on, that we must do and we also say there is always a balance there between God's part and man's part.

Another song: "Not what these hands have done, not what I feel or do can give me peace with God."

Is that the way it is? That there is nothing we can do to have peace with God? Well of course there is, we must do something about that but the Protestant emphasis does not bring that into focus. "Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God, not all my prayers or sighs or tears it is only what God can do."

Well we must think right in that issue.

"Once for All" is another song that could be questioned there.

Then there is the influence of literature.

I'm so glad to the publication work that we have, we ought to pray for our brethren and sisters as they continue that, we are living in a wonderful time, a generation ago there were not the opportunities of school textbooks and church papers if you go back a generation or so ago. We are blessed abundantly with good literature, good books and Mennonite writings, historical writings and the list goes on and on.

So let's not be overly influenced by literature from the Protestants even though you might enjoy Matthew Henry's commentary, that is not wrong, and there is a place I think to use commentaries if we do it carefully and if we understand what we are doing with them, but there are some influences that can come through and we need to be aware of that.

Maybe especially when the Protestant churches or those around us hold seminars and that type of thing and we get to fellowship yet in those circles that could definitely be really destructive.

We are glad for the mission work.

That would be another one and how we have an emphasis on that which is biblical and scriptural.

Another one would be the tendency to absorb more recent Protestant thinking, that's why I was referring to the seminars, the tapes, the books and all that is there, some of the modern books that come on the bookshelf and they are not always right, we can learn much from them and I'm not saying those are wrong but and remember when we have those on our shelves and we read those type of books they are probably not written from our slant and it could lead us wrongly.

I think we should first of all be very thankful for what God has done for us and the blessing of being part of the plain people. Let's never see that as a negative, we have a great opportunity that God has given us, the lines have fallen in pleasant places so we should be thankful. That is one concluding thought.

Another one is to be careful in what we are doing.

I think this message helps us to see that we have to make some choices and we have to be careful or we are led astray and also be Conservative, that has always been a blessing you know instead of being near or on the cutting edge in what's going on. Like in the literature realm it is good to be Conservative and not to try and digest all the new books that come along and that type of thing.

There are many ways that conservatism helps us.

Turn yet to Matthew seven and notice what Jesus says about the way that leads to heaven and the way that leads to the destruction, very familiar words in [Matthew 7:13](#):

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: (that means narrow) for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." [Matthew 7:13-14](#).

Mark those words of Jesus well. There are many professing Christians and if you go further you will see He is talking about professing Christians, He is talking about masses of professing Christians on their way to destruction, there are others too on that way not only professing Christians, but I think He is talking about that because He goes on in the next number of verses and compares it to the good fruits and the thistles.

But He says: The way is narrow and few there be that find it.

And all above all there is nothing that we want more than finally to be with those who have found The Way and are being led all the way to heaven.

Let us press toward that goal.

Courtesy of The Australian Anabaptist

A free monthly Publication of Conservative Mennonite Articles

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: shimara2@bigpond.com

Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org