

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,  
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in  
the house.

Matthew 5:15

**From The Editor's Desk.***Discipleship and Separation. In the World but Not of the World.*

What do these two statements mean to you? How do you apply them to your life?

The early Anabaptists had a strong sense of discipleship to Jesus, in fact so strong and compelling was it to them that many suffered death, imprisonment, torture, loss of family, loss of all worldly possessions, in truth they were not only disciples of Jesus in all things but still they lived in the world and maintained their separation from the world and unto God.

To them there was no either/or in whom they acknowledged as their Master, it was Jesus and Jesus only.

Where do we stand? Where do I stand?

We have nice words in songs like: "My faith looks up to thee, O Lamb of Calvary." and "Jesus, I my cross have taken." and "I know whom I have believed." But are we persuaded that He to whom we have committed ourselves is able to keep us no matter the storms of life, the attacks of the evil one to bring us down, the allurements of the world, the enticements of those who have a religion that does not require quite so much of giving up self but yet profess to be Christians?

How do we view following Jesus all the way? Are we truly willing to carry out the words in the song: "Where He leads me I will follow." Or do we want to go only as far as the next corner because we do not know what may lie beyond?

This matter of separation unto God through the way of discipleship and cross bearing is a matter of life and death – eternal life with Christ or the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone with the devil, that deceiver.

This month's issue is focused on discipleship and separation with the conclusion of January's message on Separated Unto God, an article on the Anabaptist view of Discipleship, another on the Anabaptist Belief of the Two Resurrections as well as others that point us to the Scriptural requirements of being a separated people as God calls us to be in thought, word and deed. 1 Peter 1:15.

Chapter 20 in the Book of Revelation is especially pertinent as we consider our very short life here on earth as the only opportunity to be among those whose names are written book of life and not finish in the lake of fire

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Hebrews 2:3.

## *Separated Unto God.*

*Extract from a message by Harold B. Good, Part 2.  
Danskin Mennonite Church Revival Meetings, 2006.*



*Across the Pulpit.*

In the January issue we ended by seeing how Joseph didn't say they had to take him back when he died and bury him like they did Jacob but he said: God will surely visit you and when He does and brings you out of here you take my bones along.

And the writer to the Hebrews commenting on this says: That by faith Joseph made commandment concerning his bones. By faith.

Now what is the application to us?

Now we are not here to stay either, that is why we need to be separate from an ungodly society, we are looking for the Lord, we are looking for another city, here we have no continuing city.

And [1 Corinthians 15:51](#) says: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

And we are looking forward to that time; we are not here to stay.

They saw present separation necessary for that future separation and they refer to life as a pilgrimage. Not only did they see their posterity some day going back to Canaan but they saw the life here in this world as temporary and when Jacob was before Pharaoh he referred to this life as a pilgrimage.

Joseph knew full well that if his family, the children of Israel, would be mixed in and absorbed into Egyptian culture they would never get out and they would never come out of Egypt again. And the same is true for us; if we identify with and are absorbed into the culture around us then we will perish with that culture.

I would like to say this yet. We need to maintain a line of tension.

You know man's natural tendency is to remove the cross, and we are not living in a time of persecution like some of our forefathers did, we live in a time where things are pretty favourable and I think for that reason the church needs to establish some guidelines, some standards that provide a

certain amount of tension, there needs to be a visible separation that will put that line of tension between us and the world.

Now I would like to think yet for a little bit about the results of separation.

You know they really had a lot of benefits for not having been absorbed into Egyptian culture and I don't know how this all came to be other than that God was overruling for them and Joseph was looking out for them, but they were placed in the land of Goshen which is described as the best of the land.

Now I believe tonight that the Christian life and a separated life is a very satisfying way of life. You know when I think of our basic way of life and the approach we have to family life, home life, our mothers being homemakers and then I compare that with some of the things that I see in society around us, I wouldn't trade for anything.

Now I think of other things that are tremendously protected because of it. I'm not sure if it is the case any more I don't get by there as much in the evening for some reason, but there was a local shopping centre in our area where there were a lot of young people hanging out evenings, especially weekends, and we heard from some of the people in our community that there was a lot of drug dealing going on there, it was may be only three or 4 miles from our house and yet our young people had no contact there whatsoever, they never went there, they had no reason to be there, and our way of life provided a protection from that kind of thing and we ought to appreciate that. It is a satisfying way of life.

Separation is a must for spiritual prosperity. The Israelites prospered in the land of Goshen and that is true for us in the Christian life and in following the Bible way today.

We say that separation is for a testimony and it is a testimony, but I think primarily first of all separation is for ourselves rather than a witness because we need it, we need the protection that it provides lest we become swallowed up, that is what separation does for us and makes us useful. I'm not sure what all Jacob said to Pharaoh, it says that when he went into Pharaoh he blessed Pharaoh. That can mean that he worshipped Pharaoh or saluted or greeted Pharaoh, the word blessed is used that way, the Hebrew word that it comes from really means to kneel, and so I'm not sure just

what all Jacob said to Pharaoh but I am impressed with one thing and that is when you stop and try to imagine that scene, here comes Joseph with his father from the land of Canaan and here you have these two men meeting Pharaoh, the monarch, the undisputed ruler of a fairly advanced civilisation for that time, there was a lot a wealth and here comes this nomad from the land of Canaan. And what did they talk about? Well Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he is. That is something we talk about pretty much and I think it highlights the fact that in spite of their tremendous differences in station of life and levels of achievement from a worldly standpoint, they were both dying men. Pharaoh on the throne of Egypt was a dying man headed toward eternity and that is why I think we talk about it each time so much because we are so conscious of the temporary nature of our life here.

And I believe tonight, I verily believe that a separated people have the answer for death and for dying and have the answer that the world needs today, we are all dying men, and we have some rather unique opportunities today.

Well one of the results is that there is separation and judgement.

You know the time did come when God took the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

I would just like to notice two scriptures in the book of Exodus.

[Exodus 9:24-26](#)

"So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. <sup>25</sup>And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. <sup>26</sup>Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, was there no hail."

Separation and judgement.

You know if we want to be separated in judgement we want to be separated here in this life.

Another one yet: [Exodus 11:4-7](#)

"And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: <sup>5</sup>And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the

firstborn of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. <sup>6</sup>And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. <sup>7</sup>But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

Do you think God still makes a difference between His people and the people that are following the devil? Does it make a difference? Certainly it does.

I appreciate the many young people that are with us this evening and I realise that youth is a very critical time. In a lot of ways youth is when you are sorting through what you have been taught, sorting through the things that your parents and your church have taught and you need to eventually decide for yourself what you will believe. You can't always just do things because you were taught but you need to sort through that and when you do that you realise that your parents and the adults in the church, the church leaders, were not always perfect.

And so how do you relate to that, how do you work through, how do you sort through, how do you decide then? I would like to say this to you if you think maybe there are some things about your home that are a bit weak, just remember that while your parents may not be perfect they made some choices that gave you an opportunity to choose the right thing, you at least had a chance to choose the right.

And I would like to ask young people this question sometimes: "If your parents had believed like you do when they were your age would you have had a chance?"

You say: "Well it's not really my responsibility. It is the church's responsibility; it is the leaders' responsibility to maintain the right thing or the older people, not youth!"

The Lord is looking for young people with conviction and commitment to Him, to stand up to be counted and to be pure and holy and righteous and godly in a sinful world, to stand out and to be ready to be counted as separate from all that.

You know when we stop and realise that this world is on its way to hell why would we want to identify with it? Why would we want to be influ-

enced by the fads and fashions that the world produces? And I think that is what a lot of things are that we face on a practical level; it is who we want to identify with.

I would just like to give a challenge to all of us and especially to the youth that are with us and we appreciate your interest and a contribution that you are making, but you know as individuals we tend in certain directions and it is not a secret in our circles that there are those who tend to the looser side, who wish that there would be just a little more leeway, a little more room for themselves in the church, and then there are others who feel that we ought to be just a little tighter, a little stricter and a little more careful in some of these things, there can be an extreme in that side I realise that, but a question that you ought to ask yourself and I ask myself is: Which way am I influencing? Am I influencing, am I lending my influence in the direction of helping the church be better and be all she should be or do I lend my influence in tearing down and destroying and deteriorating?

Sometimes people say: “But does the line have to be drawn so tightly? H Now could we just be a little more relaxed? Why does the church have to draw the line as tight as it does, is this the only place to draw the line?”

But I think we all know what happens when you whittle away and whittle away and you whittle away, after a while there is nothing left. And I'm not saying tonight, I'm not criticising everybody that does not do exactly like we do, or see it our way, but the church has tried to draw a line at a place that is sustainable, something that can be reproduced, something that will help guard the church and protect the church from going so far down the road that all will be lost. Some of us have seen that happen and we have seen that eventually church leaders were trying to hold the line in a place where it couldn't be done any more and the battle was lost and it is much better to draw the line in a little farther where it is more manageable.

As individuals, young people included, I say there is a tendency to hide behind the crowd, but we need to assume some responsibilities, some personal individual responsibility for the direction the church takes and we ought to think about the future welfare of the church, we ought to be able to think down the road a few years but not just think about the here and now, making room for myself to what I would like to have, but think about the effect it has. What kind of a church do you want for your children if the Lord tarries?

Sometimes you know people appreciate the church, they want a separated church but they don't assume personal responsibility or sense personal responsibility for helping it to be that way. And sometimes people say: "Well some of this is just tradition anyway."

I realise that it is possible to get to that place where it is all form and all tradition but I also believe we can't take a negative attitude toward tradition and keep on being a Conservative and plain church, I don't think that will work.

I do have some concerns about what we face as a church today as it relates to casual wear, I would like to encourage our brethren even when you are not at church, when you are going to town wear shirts that fit with plain people and I sometimes I see people in bold striped shirts and jeans and they just don't really look like plain people. I haven't seen the extremes in our group that I have seen in some places but just to illustrate it: Some time ago I saw a picture of a man who is an auctioneer in our area and he was on the board for some organisation and I discovered he wears a plain suit! Well I never would have guessed it by seeing him when he is in his work attire, when he is auctioneering, I would not have thought that he would wear a plain suit.

We don't spell out everything in our discipline but we ought to choose things that fit and are consistent with the things that we do spell out and that are consistent with the way that we attire ourselves on Sundays. And I will say this: I think sometimes brethren that we depend on our sisters too much for identification, we can fit in a little more than our sisters, they can't as well because of their distinctive attire. And it is something to think about; really we ought to carry the brunt of that responsibility because we are supposed to be the leaders.

I would like to just mention one other thing yet in relation to this matter of separation in attire. I'm disappointed sometimes how quickly our brethren lay their suit coats aside, we don't wear them just for weather protection, they are part of our plain formal dress for church services and I think that to quickly to lay them aside, thinking we don't need them to keep warm, will tear down some of our practices of separation. I think it is something for us to consider, it is part of a trend toward being so casual.

While these are a few applications that I think of, there are more that we could make.

I would like to come back to the overall principles.

What determines my likes and dislikes, where do I want to fit in and when things change in the world am I influenced by that? You know we have seen hairstyles for men come and go from one extreme to the other, now it is at the short extreme and that has filtered into the church. You know what do we want to identify with?

In conclusion I would like to mention yet that separation is eternal.

We talked about separation in judgement but I would like to emphasise also with that that separation is eternal. Leaving Joseph's example now in the principle of separation, I'm going to look at Luke 16 where we have this familiar account of the rich man in hell.

It says here that the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell and he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom, [Luke 16:24-26](#):

“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. <sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. <sup>26</sup>And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.”

Does this sound like separation to you, a great gulf?

I think of it this way: Think of separation of a line that runs through time and eternity. Everybody is on one side or the other. We are either on God's side or are against God. We are either on God's side or on the devil's side, one or the other.

The difference is, you could think of it, if I had a blackboard I would draw two lines that go across each other, the one line represents good and evil and the other line represents the separation between time and eternity.

On this side of eternity, this side of that line, we can still cross the separation line, we can cross from one side to the other but when we cross the line into eternity then we cannot cross over any more.

Abraham said: Son remember, and besides this there is a great gulf fixed. And those from here who want to go over can and those from there who want to come here cannot.

And so the truth is that this side of the line you're on when you pass from time to eternity is the side you will be on for all of eternity.

That is sobering, that makes life so serious.

And the question I would like to leave with you today is: On which side of this gulf are you now?

It is not a gulf yet, it still can be crossed but some day it will be a gulf and will not be able to be crossed.

Today are you on the side of the line that you want to be on for eternity?

That is the question I would like to leave with us this evening:

Are you on the side of the line that you want to be on?

If today you know that you are on the wrong side of the line then we invite you to come across to the right side. To Jesus side and find healing.



### ***SEEKING THOSE GONE ASTRAY***

"How think ye?" Jesus asked His audience one day (Matt. 18:12). He was probing their hearts and giving them an insight into His purpose. What Christ proceeded to say runs counter to human logic but reveals the heart of the Good Shepherd. His question, "How think ye?" demands an answer from us yet today.

"If a man have a hundred sheep," Jesus proposed, "and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray" (vv. 12-13). Such is the heart of a shepherd that will not rest until all the sheep are accounted for.

This shepherd left all his other sheep in the fold and sought for the one that was missing. We should not think that he was unmindful of the ninety-nine because he left them to search for the one astray. The ninety-nine were safe within the fold; they were sheltered. Their peacefulness there surely was comforting to the shepherd. He was confident in their security, knowing they were in the fold. But there was something incomplete relating to the whole flock, because one was absent.

It seems likely that the shepherd's anxiety for the one missing sheep was in proportion to the satisfaction he felt when noting the contentedness and safety of those in the fold. That is, the shepherd's care and joy for the sheep in the fold was the measure of his motivation to bring the one lost sheep home. The warmth and safety of the fold only sharpened his picture of the peril of that one out on the mountain.

It is said that a sainted mother of a large family of a century and more ago was asked which one of her children she loved the most. She answered, "The one that is away from home until he returns, and the one that is ill until he is well." Certainly, in truth, she loved them all equally. But love has a multiplication effect on one's feeling toward someone dear who is away or not faring well. That is especially true when there is reason to fear that the other is in danger. That is why the shepherd went searching for the one lost lamb.

According to the Scriptures, there is a difference between the state of being prodigal and that of having lost the way on the mountainside. The prodigal son Jesus told about in Luke 15 impudently demanded his portion of goods and hardheartedly took his own way. The Scriptures do not say so, but one is left with no other thought than that the father grieved over his son's ways. But in the parable, Jesus depicts the father as waiting at home for his son's return. The saddened father didn't go looking for his errant son.

Perhaps the determined set of the son's will, evidenced by having trampled on his father's feelings, dictated that it would be of no use to go looking for the boy. The son would have to come to his end out there alone, which is just what happened (Luke 15:17). However, the father was anxiously watching the road; he saw his son coming while yet "a great way off" (v. 20).

In contrast, the lost sheep had been rendered incapable of finding its way home. The fact that, as far as we know from the Scriptures, it did not resist

rescue tells us that its straying may not have been deliberate and calculated. Yes, it should have stayed close to the shepherd; its perilous condition was its fault, not the shepherd's. But there are those who, soon after their straying, realize they have taken a wrong course. Satan quickly suggests to them that there is no way to free themselves and they succumb to hopelessness. They may spend years out on the mountains cold, deep within wanting to return, but needing someone to "find" them. It is these that need to be sought out.

If the value that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, places upon rescuing the one lost sheep is related to the bliss of those safely in the fold, are we similarly affected? Yes, we should share the Shepherd's feelings. Our appreciation for being sheltered in the great fold and comforted by the all-sufficient merit of Calvary will be reflected in our yearning for those gone astray. The degree in which we share Christ's solicitous care for the lost sheep says something about our thankfulness for the benefit of the fold—the Church of God. And it indicates whether we are truly one in the bond of love with the other sheep of the fold. It is obvious that if we have a diminished love and appreciation for the Shepherd, we will not value the fold for what it is. Neither do we love the other sheep as the Shepherd does (1 John 5:1-2). Consequently, we will not be motivated to search out the lost and dying and bring them home. Why would we?

That which comes from the heart penetrates the heart. One should remember that the motive must be a heartfelt desire for the salvation of souls unto the Saviour's honor and glory. Genuineness is felt, and it speaks as much as the words one may say or not be able to say. In fact, it is a fruit of the love of God and parallels the unction of the Holy Spirit. There is a tender invitation in the sincere emotion of one's spirit when talking with someone astray.

Many years ago a few meetings were being held in a brother and sister's house in a village in Mexico. Before the service began, the brother reverently related a dream he had had just the day before. He saw his physical heart knit at the top to a larger heart. His heart, while smaller than the other one (he did not know whose it was), was beating and pumping blood through the other. But the other heart was still. As he related the dream, he questioned with wonder what it could mean.

Shortly after the service began, a wayward brother whom he had yearned for entered unexpectedly and sat down. The brother was moved, and so

was the erring one. Finally, at the close of the service, they both stood up and embraced each other, with their tears falling together to the dirt floor. Then the brother said, "Now I know what the dream meant. Through my heart being connected with this one, he will come to life."

No doubt there are others who have gone astray and need someone's heart to be knit to theirs. They need someone to persevere in prayer for them and go out and try to find them. That may be their only hope of recovery.

How many lost sheep there are today as compared to the hardhearted prodigals (which might include those who have embraced a false religion), God only knows. But believing that we are in the last days behooves us to not shrink from the effort of seeking the lost sheep. Perhaps one last time we can invite them home. In lands where the church has (or has had) mission efforts, there are many who once were baptized members but are now on the outside of the safety of the fold. Here the proportion of sheep gone astray may be greater than at home. Perhaps former missionaries will find it in their hearts to once more seek them out and point them back home.

Our efforts may seem futile at times. But Jesus said, "And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray" (Matt. 18:13) The numbers that are rescued may be few, but "if so be" that one is found and brought home, it will be worth it to Heaven.



### *The Anabaptist View of Discipleship*

"For we are but of yesterday"

Throughout the Church Age, there have been various religious movements that have left a significant impact on the world. Each of these movements was founded more or less on a pivotal teaching that preoccupied the founding fathers.

The Anabaptists too had a central doctrine to which all others were subordinate. This was the doctrine of discipleship.

The imitation of Christ was not simply a spiritual journey that was made in conjunction with a church association. Rather, it was a daily, external pattern of life that duplicated the life of Christ. The Anabaptists forsook

more than one thousand years of European religious and cultural traditions in favor of an uncompromising discipleship of the Christ of the Gospels. The life of Christ became a daily model for the Anabaptist, the teachings of Christ became his instruction, and the message that Christ brought to the world became his message for others.

Furthermore, the Anabaptists strongly rejected the Constantinian assumption that Christianity is a cultural composite, unifying politics and religion. In such a system, the willing and the unwilling, the regenerate and the unregenerate were coerced into membership of the state church. The Anabaptists protested this practice vigorously, insisting that only faithful, obedient disciples should be allowed membership in the body of Christ.

These newly enlightened and often illiterate believers had an intense desire to learn more about the One whom they had chosen to follow. Many developed such a keen interest in learning to read after their conversion that in a surprisingly short time they were able to study the Scriptures personally. The desire to know the Master more fully also led these Christians to frequently meet secretly in forests, barns, and houses even though such meetings were expressly forbidden by law. They considered the fellowship with the faithful and the simple preaching of the Gospel essential to perfecting a life of discipleship.

This costly discipleship was a voluntary action of the will and was to be borne with "joy and gladness." Exhortation was given to avoid choosing "our own chips and scraps of wood in imagined spirituality." The true disciple would accept no counterfeit that gave hope of salvation outside of walking in the steps of the true Shepherd of the sheep.

The two great pillars of discipleship that set the Anabaptists apart from contemporary religious reformers were their concepts of the cross and of love.

The Anabaptists considered bearing the cross of discipleship to be normal. They recalled Christ's teaching of being sent as sheep among wolves and believed the true Christian to be as "sheep for the slaughter." Conrad Grebel exhorted thus regarding the true believer: "They must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution, suffering, and death."

The suffering and persecution brought on by the Anabaptists' uncompromising discipleship was considered a seal on the true followers of Christ. Christ, their Captain, gave His life to do the Father's will. It was viewed as an honor to suffer for Christ. They observed that the elect from

the beginning of time suffered for their faith. From this, they viewed their tribulation as a sign that they were God's "friends and dear children."

The cross was largely the adversity brought on by the world, which often misunderstood the true Christian. Christ, being the Captain and supreme example for the disciple, lived a life of hardship, facing much opposition, and, finally, bore an actual cross in utmost weariness of flesh and agony of mind. The Anabaptist believer committed himself to a life of similar hardships.

One who places his life at risk for conscience' sake disdains the securities, lusts, and approval of the world. He has chosen to renounce material gain. The enemies of the Anabaptists frequently confiscated their properties, forcing them to start over somewhere else with almost nothing to call their own. If they chose to flee authorities, it also meant leaving possessions and establishments behind. If they were at all tolerated, they were only allowed to till the least productive land.

Families were broken up as fathers fled the authorities or spent weeks at a time on missionary journeys. Even the most precious relationships were sacrificed as parents or marriage partners rotted in prison or were led to the stake rather than to deny their Savior.

A significant aspect of Anabaptist discipleship that contemporaries could neither match nor understand was a life of strict moral blamelessness. Drunkenness, lying, cheating, pride, and social sins were fully forsaken for the sake of following the footsteps and teachings of Jesus.

This life of blamelessness caused critics of the Anabaptists to retaliate in jealousy and anger. By describing the lives of these "ignorant fanatics" as seeming "at first contact irreproachable, pious, unassuming, attractive, yea, above this world," contemporary religious reformers attempted to use these godly qualities as further testimony against them, saying that "in short, their hypocrisy is great and manifold."

The other pillar of discipleship was their concept of love. The Anabaptists' practice of Christian love placed them in a very singular, yet physically vulnerable, position. They expressed love as a gentle goodwill toward all, including those who treated them spitefully. This love completely disallowed the use of force. It reached out in brotherly care and material support of one another.

These acts of charity sometimes caused enemies of the Anabaptists to accuse them of seeking to attain righteousness by good works. This was not

true. To the disciple true love was not an emotional whim or the grant of a favor for the return of some advantage. Rather, it was following the example of Christ in denying oneself for the well-being of others. Love, as the Anabaptists practiced it, demanded a definite outward expression as a result of a constant frame of mind influenced by the work of the Holy Spirit.

As with any true disciple of Christ, love for the lost and a simple obedience to the commands of Christ motivated the Anabaptists to take the Great Commission seriously. While the reformers taught that this great mission had expired with the Apostolic Age, the Anabaptists believed that evangelism was the duty of all Christians. The work of evangelism was not left for the ordained or the intellectuals; rather, the common man was considered the most eligible to witness to the common people. Some even left their jobs and families to become wandering preachers, living off the gifts of the brethren.

When an Anabaptist faced an injustice to his life or property, his response of nonresistant love took on the form of a cross. Nothing could induce him to resort to force, nor did he seek prosecution against one who had transgressed against him. He was a disciple of Christ; therefore, he went the second mile and patiently endured the wrong.

Because of their consistent views on the discipleship of Christ, the Anabaptists made a significant impact on both church history and world history, as well as providing a priceless heritage for those who follow. If their children shall pass this heritage on to another generation, they must embrace this doctrine of discipleship with no less tenacity than did the truest Anabaptist heart.

*Brother Nevin. Eastern Mennonite Historical Journal October 2010*



## **CAMOUFLAGED CHRISTIANS**

To camouflage is to disguise or conceal. Camouflaging is used for self-protection. This is illustrated by men in warfare who camouflage themselves and their equipment, by the sportsman hunting for game, and by the animal kingdom in their ability to blend into the surrounding terrain. Protective coloration helps animals hide from their enemies. Birds, such as

the pheasant, have colours that make them seem to be a part of the surroundings in which they nest. Certain chameleons, a type of lizard, change colours in just a few seconds. They can quickly develop black spots, dark streaks, or tan or grey markings to conceal themselves.

While God provided this protection for the animal creation, He does not intend that Christians hide in their surrounding environment. For the Christian to hide for self-protection is to misunderstand God's purposes and to distrust His power. The camouflaged Christian is a useless Christian. The God-approved Christian is distinct from the world in testimony, in appearance, in holiness, and in courage. To be ashamed of Bible standards and the church's applications of truth is to display a heart of unbelief. Christians who die to self need not seek self protection or cringe at the gaze of the unconverted. To be identified with the royal family of God is a privilege that ought to inspire us to walk with a definite and unashamed step.

Camouflaging is sought first in the area of our casual dress. While attending religious functions, it is not likely that we feel a need for self-protection, but it is when one is mixing with the world in business life, shopping, or in other social exposures that we usually see the breakdown. The kind of clothing we wear for non-church life casual settings tells much about our convictions or lack of them. Certainly, the plain hat and bonnet are a contrast to today's fashionable styles.

One serious question needs to be considered. Will we maintain the doctrine of separation and nonconformity in attire when we are ashamed of plain attire? Will we maintain the faith in other areas if we move toward the position of an invisible church? Pilgrim Marpeck, an Anabaptist church leader, struggled with the influence of the reformers "invisible" church. Schwenckfeld taught that the outward expressions of the Christian faith including Baptism and the Lord's Supper were idolatry because they prevented people from being concerned for what was truly important. The position represented by Schwenckfeld proved a great temptation for the persecuted Anabaptists. Why not become an invisible church so that we will not be persecuted anymore? Marpeck wrote several books to counteract this false teaching. While Christians in the United States are not openly persecuted, the temptation to become an invisible church exists today as surely as in the time of Marpeck.

Jesus said, “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory; and in his Father’s, and of the Holy angels.”

Are we seeking camouflage, or are we rejoicing to be identified with Christ?

*Brother Carl. Eastern Mennonite Testimony, Volume XVI, April 1984.*



## *THE TWO RESURRECTIONS*

(The present trend of Mennonite teaching compared with the teaching of our Anabaptist forefathers.)

### *Part 1*

### *Anabaptist Belief of the Two Resurrections*

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20: 6).

A maze of teachings concerning resurrections, raptures and millennialism confronts the believer today, leaving him confused and in doubt as to what should and should not be believed. It is, therefore, not this writer’s intention to be dogmatic and insist on his own point of view but rather to bring to the reader’s attention the exodus or departure from our Anabaptist forefathers’ belief regarding the two resurrections and compare such with the present trend of thought.

First of all, the reader should consider that our Anabaptist forefathers received their belief by and through the blood and fire baptism of the reformation times, and the present trend of thought has been picked up from more modern sources. The first known sermon on millennialism (Pre), among the Mennonite brotherhood, has been said to be preached by A. D. Wenger, Sr., in January, 1898, at Johnstown, Pa., after he and a number of

other Mennonite young men had spent some time studying at one of the popular, non-Mennonite Bible institutes (Mennonite Encyclopaedia, p.558).

It is claimed that four major sources are responsible for the present “literal reign” teaching: (1) Pietism, (2) Plymouth Brethren, (3) Seventh Day Adventists, (4) Scofield Reference Bible (Mennonite Encyclopaedia, p. 557). A fifth source might be Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Though Menno Simons has plainly stated the Anabaptists’ view of the two resurrections (Book One, p. 231-237) and though a literal reign (Chiliasm) was rejected by the early church fathers (City of God, p. 716 -7 20) and rejected by all the leading reformers (Mennonite Encyclopaedia, p. 557) and condemned in the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (Little, Book of Revelation, p. 202) and though Menno Simons and the Phillips brothers succeeded in purging the Mennonite brotherhood of all Chiliastic tendencies, Menno having said that he did not believe in a literal reign and, “He who believes it is no Mennonite,” (Mennonite Encyclopaedia, p.559) yet today the teaching of millennialism and a literal reign seems to have taken a death-grip hold on our Mennonite churches.

In the past the Amish constituency of the Mennonite brotherhood has not accepted millennialism and has abided close to the faith of our Anabaptist forefathers regarding the two resurrections, but even here there seems to be a weakening, doubtless because of the flood of present Mennonite teachings; and there is beginning to be a leaning toward the idea of a literal reign. (This writer believes that if people would more fully let Christ reign in their hearts in a spiritual sense as spoken of by Paul, Ephesians 3:17, they would not be so taken up with the idea of a literal reign.)

But that has been the curse of mankind. Israel rejected God from being their spiritual king and desired a literal one (1 Samuel 8:7). The Jews desired to make a literal king out of Christ but rejected the true King of the Jews (John 6:15, 18:37, and 19:15). This same literal desire is largely responsible for the position the Pope holds today among the Catholic people, and it is to be wondered if our Mennonite constituency shows true wisdom when it so loudly proclaims a literal reign today.

The writer feels, with Adam Clarke, that the expositors of the book of Revelation have done a “disservice to religion” (Book Six, p. 967) and perhaps even an injustice to the parables of Christ. We well know that prophesying seems the order of the present day and much of the Athenian spirit prevails: “They spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21).

Man should always be careful, lest by his interpretation of the Word and future events, he distract from the plain teachings of Christ. The kingdom of heaven still is, and must be, compared unto a net cast into the sea, the field of wheat and tares and the ten virgins.

A further danger is to make the Scriptures say what they say not, an example of this being the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

Paul here teaches the relationship between the living Christian believer and those who have died in the faith, showing that at Christ’s second coming they shall together meet the Lord in the air. The advocates of a literal reign often try to use this Scripture to show the relationship between the lost and the saved, adding words of their own to those of Paul, “Only the saved shall rise; the unsaved shall not rise.” Paul, of course, is entirely silent as to whether or not the unsaved shall rise; he does not even mention them. It would be well for us to follow his example.

## *Part 2*

### *Anabaptist Belief of the Two Resurrections*

Some 1600 years ago Augustine said, “John has spoken of the two resurrections in such a way that many do not understand the first of the two and so construe the passage into ridiculous fancies” (City of God, p. 719). To which Menno Simons added, “The Scriptures point out two resurrections, namely, a bodily resurrection from the grave at the last day and a spiritual resurrection from sin and death, to a new life and change of heart,” (Book One, p. 231) and then further says, “Before a resurrection from the dead can take place, the death of the body is first necessary. Behold, thus, we have to die with Christ unto sin if we would be made alive with Him. Paul says, ‘If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.’ (2 Timothy 2:11)

This resurrection includes the new creature, the spiritual birth and sanctification, without which none shall see the Lord” (p. 231). Menno Simons

further says, “May the God of grace grant us, that we may have part in the first resurrection spoken of, which resurrection does not take place in the bodily resurrection from the dead, as will the other resurrection. This resurrection consists alone in dying unto, mortifying and burying, the sinful body through putting off and dying unto the old life and to arise and be received into a new, divine conduct and pious life” (p. 237).

This, in short, was our Anabaptist forefathers’ belief. They definitely did not believe that the two resurrections applied to the just and the unjust, but much rather held that the first resurrection was a spiritual one in this life and the second a bodily resurrection of all (he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,” Revelation 20:6). They believed that Adam and Eve died spiritually on the day that they ate of the forbidden fruit (as God said they would) and that it was to such that Paul said, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead” (Ephesians 5:14).

It was of these same people that Christ spoke, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live,” (John 5:25). This they held to be the first resurrection, a spiritual resurrection, a passing from death unto life (John 5:24); and they fully believed that on all who had part in this first resurrection, over such the second death had no power; but they were priests of God and would reign with Him a thousand years. This, then, was that of which Christ had spoken to Martha, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:26).

Our Anabaptist forefathers did not understand this thousand-year period as a literal period but as Augustine said, “The thousand years is an equivalent for the whole duration of this world,” (City of God, p. 720) or as others expressed it, “The thousand-year period is to be understood of the whole New Testament dispensation from the incarnation and enthronement of the Son of God to the final casting of Satan into hell” (Little, p. 201). They understood that Satan was bound (for the Christian believer) “when the church began to be extended beyond the nations of Judea, and shall be bound unto the end of the world, when he is to be loosened” (City of God, p. 723). It was for this binding of Satan that Jesus Himself said in reference to His casting out devils and those who had been bound by Satan, “How

can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" (Matthew 12: 29).

From the Anabaptists' viewpoint we thus see that the first resurrection is one in which all newborn creatures have taken part; they have been baptized into the death of Christ; and just as Christ rose from the grave (was resurrected), so also these have arisen in newness of life.

The second resurrection is then a future resurrection in which as Christ said, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29).

Quite lamentable is the fact, that while Christ spoke of the above as "the hour," those who hold for a literal reign of a thousand years have stretched this hour into a thousand years. Certainly if man takes the liberty to do that, it is hard to say what he will not do to the Word of God.

You say we (the writer) have been too dogmatic? No, not at all! The writer feels that the glories of the future are today just as little understood as was the plan of salvation before the advent of Christ, but he hopes he has the reader's pardon if he chooses to take his stand alongside the blood and fire bought belief of our Anabaptist forefathers rather than that which has come from modern sources.

— Jacob J. Hershberger



## *Purity*

*From a devotional by Aaron Troyer (Berea Mennonite Fellowship)*

There are various kinds and types of purity and impurity. One is pure in heart. One song writer expressed his desire to be “Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be.” Thus, there may be perhaps degrees of purity in heart that we could be. Our longing is to be purer in heart.

The Psalmist said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

The Proverb writer asked a question, “Who can say, I have made my heart clean?” Proverbs 20:9 Who can say this? No one can say this. We cannot cleanse our hearts.

The Word does say, “purify your hearts, ye double minded,” James 4:8 this, of course, is our part, but God does the cleansing. We cannot cleanse ourselves. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Psalm 51:7 We need to be cleansed and washed. This then is what makes the purification or purifying.

I like the song that says, “Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole; I want Thee forever to live in my soul,” . . . and make me to be whiter than snow. Is it not a miracle that God can wash and purify our filthy, dirty, black, ugly hearts in the red blood of Jesus (using terms of colours) and end up with them whiter than snow — whiter than any fuller on earth can make a cloth? We cannot cleanse nor purify ourselves. We need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

God expressed Himself throughout the Word, “the word of the Lord came unto,” and “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21 This is how the Scriptures were written.

In Ezekiel 11:19 God says, “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh” Both of these are mentioning the flesh. God is typifying and symbolizing the New Birth and that He will regenerate, renew and give us a new heart and a new spirit. He is referring to this already in the Old Testament. “I will give them one . . . I will take the stony heart,” We call this the New Birth, the conversion, regenerating the heart, giving us a new heart of flesh, one that has feeling, (not the flesh that pumps the blood) one that senses, one that is touched, a new heart.

Ezekiel was later inspired of God to almost quote the same verse again in 36:26-27 “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” The only way this can be done is with a new heart and a new spirit that He will put within us.

There are other members of the body that are affected by the purification of the regeneration and the giving of a new heart. The heart is one member. These are members that can be used both impure and pure. One writer says of hands that they can be swift to “shed innocent blood.” Proverbs 6:17. Another writer says, “lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” 1Timothy 2:8. Do we see the contrast after these members are purified?

There are “feet that be swift in running to mischief.” Proverbs 6:18. Another one in the New Testament says, “[having] your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Ephesians 6:15. What a difference, if the feet are purified.

Eyes can be, “full of adultery.” 2 Peter 2:14, or anointed with “eyesalve.” Revelation 3:18.

The tongue, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matthew 12:37. James writes, “the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . it defileth the whole body” James 3:6. There are four different terms that lips can be 1) “uncircumcised” Exodus 6:12, “flattering” Psalm 12:2, “feigned” Psalm 17:1, and “unclean” Isaiah 6:5. If the heart is purified the lips will be praising God as the psalmist indicates, “My lips shall praise thee” Psalm 63:3.

In Deuteronomy 5:29, God expresses His heart’s desire. His expression is like this, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” We know the mind and desire of God. In the New Testament with the coming of Jesus, He has made this possible. We can have a new heart and a new spirit within us.

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: [shimara2@bigpond.com](mailto:shimara2@bigpond.com)

Web: [www.anabaptistmennonites.org](http://www.anabaptistmennonites.org)