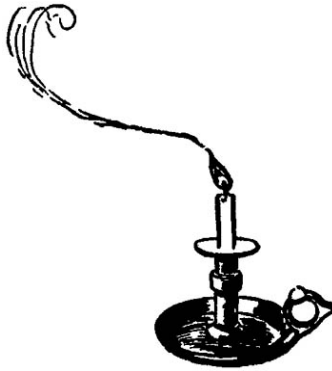


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 10 No. 1 – January 2013



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

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor

At the time of this writing we know Christ has not yet returned to claim His own but neither should we be complacent in our watching for Him as the Apostle Peter warned us in 1 Peter 4:7: “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” More importantly we have the words of Jesus Himself in Mark 13: 24-37 and in particular those last eleven words in verse 37, “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

We found these words of comfort and warning in a recent reading on Noah, Genesis 6:8-11 says; “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”⁹ These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God.¹⁰ And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.”

None of us can say that the world today is any different.

Matthew Henry said this in his Concise Bible Commentary:

“Noah did not find favour in the eyes of men; they hated and persecuted him, because both by his life and preaching he condemned the world: but he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and this made him more truly honourable than the men of renown. Let this be our chief desire, let us labour that we may be accepted of Him. When the rest of the world was wicked, Noah kept his integrity. God's good-will towards Noah produced this good work in him. He was a just man, that is justified before God, by faith in the promised Seed. As such he was made holy, and had right principles; and was righteous in his conversation. He was not only honest, but devout; it was his constant care to do the will of God. God looks down upon those with an eye of favour, who sincerely look up to Him with an eye of faith. It is easy to be religious when religion is in fashion; but it shows strong faith and resolution, to swim against the stream, and to appear for God when no one else appears for Him; Noah did so. All kinds of sin were found among men. They corrupted God's worship. Sin filled the earth with violence, and this fully justified God's resolution to destroy the world. The contagion spread. When wickedness is become general, ruin is not far off; while there is a remnant of praying people in a nation, to empty the measure as it fills, judgments may be long kept off; but when all hands are at work to pull down the fences, by sin, and none stand in the gap to make up the breach, what can be expected but a flood of wrath?”



BUT AS YESTERDAY

*To every thing there is a season,
A time to every purpose under the heaven*

Ecclesiastes 3:1

The fading of a year into history usually brings some reflection. The expiration of the old year reminds us that time is speeding on at a seemingly accelerated pace. Man reflects on time from within time, but God sees it from the perspective of eternity.

"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep" Psalm 90:4-5. This prayer, which is commonly attributed to Moses, points out the fact that time, once past, is irrecoverable.

A thousand years of time—our minds can scarcely grasp the length thereof. And to think that they are "yesterdays" when they are past! What may be the meaning, and the lesson, in the inspired words of the psalm writer?

The description of time is limited by our finite minds. Our accustomed way of thinking about time in terms of "past, present, and future" is inadequate. But it is the best that man can do. Actually, the past is no longer time, neither has the future become time. Time is only now. "Yesterday, today, and tomorrow" must be viewed the same way. "Today" is the only real essence of time.

Ancient peoples devised several means of "telling time." Among these is the hourglass. An hourglass consists of two clear, counterpoised flask-like vessels joined together by a slender neck. Dry sand in the upper chamber trickles through the neck into the bottom part in a known amount of time. Thus, the sand in an "hour" glass takes sixty minutes of time to transfer from top to bottom. There are lessons to be learned from the hourglass.

Let us think particularly now of time as it pertains to salvation. First of all, it should be noted that time is opportunity and grace. Discipleship and consecration also unfold only in time. Time (grace and opportunity) is like the sand that transfers from the top portion of the hourglass to the bottom. It takes time to be holy. If a man or woman, young or old, squanders time, he or she is, in actuality, spurning the grace of God. Blessed opportunities are lost, and the matchless grace in Christ Jesus is squandered by the misuse and neglect of time.

In many respects the sand in the top of an hourglass typifies "tomorrow," the sand trickling through the neck is "today," and "yesterday" is the sand in the bottom.

Job had an insight to man's time on earth when he asked: Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling? Job 7:1

No one has ever done anything in a yesterday. No soul ever repented or consecrated himself in a yesterday. The yesterdays only contain the testimony of opportunities and grace that were either squandered or heeded during "today." Yesterdays, including the very most recent one, are the mute record of time forever gone.

As much as one might wish to bring back a yesterday and live it over, it is impossible. The Scriptures tell us of several days to which God added more time for the sake of His children, Joshua 10:14; Isaiah 38:4-8, but He has never brought back a yesterday. He could do so, but He has decreed otherwise.

Yesterdays cooperate with us mortals only to the point of memories. These may be good or bad, precious or abhorrent. Yesterdays do not regard with sympathy our regrets and recriminations. Only God, who inhabits eternity, Isaiah 57:15, is able to heal those hurts of the yesterdays. There is, however, one benefit that can be derived from the yesterdays: the memory of their experiences serves for our learning.

Just as yesterday has shut its door to opportunity, neither has anyone ever done anything in the future. Man proposes to do thus and thus in the future, but it is God who disposes the matter, Proverbs 16:33. Men are presumptuous concerning the future, which is another way of saying that man tends to take the grace of God for granted. This is one of the most tragic errors of mankind. The mythical "tomorrow" has lured many a person into the all too common vice of procrastination, Acts 24:25. Hell has used many "tomorrows" with great success, no doubt contributing to the need of enlarging herself to receive those thus deceived, Isaiah 5:14.

Truly, we live only in that narrow and restricted neck of the hourglass—time. Here only does the sand of the promised grace in Christ Jesus convert into the power of God unto salvation, and this is freely available to all who hear. Here, alone, all the tender invitations of God in Christ through the Spirit are heard and felt. Grace and opportunity are available and accessible only in the present. Now, today is the real essence of time. This is our

moment and our hour. It is our hope. For this reason the Scriptures say, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" Hebrews 4:7. Then, so quickly, with hardly a thought on man's part, "today" slips into the yesterdays.

The Lord draws near to the heart of man only in the context of the now. While the future is in His hands, He works with us in the present, because that's where life is lived. For this reason He says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" Isaiah 55:6.

A certain poet says how he "Stood at the time beaten portals, where many a pilgrim had passed ... And, musing in silent devotion, eternity seemed to draw near." How may one stand at these portals? If we put our ear of faith close to the slender part of the hourglass, we will hear the undeniable soft whisper of the rapidly flowing sand. Time is speedily, yet so quietly, slipping through the today, becoming yesterdays. Eternity then seems to draw near, and today takes on a true perspective.

We have reason to pray with the psalmist, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" Psalm 90:12. For even a thousand years, once they are past, are but as a yesterday.



Key Anabaptist Positions

Edited from an address by Brother Melvin Burkholder

At the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church Ministers Meeting, Ashland.

Concluding part from December 2012 issue.

5]. Key Anabaptist position number five.

The Anabaptists viewed the church as a separated, disciplined Fellowship of saints namely of all believing regenerated Christians, children of God, born from above by the Word and the Spirit, this is the view of the church.

The Reformed view is as Calvin would have put it is: The church is that mass of men, (now I want you to think carefully about the difference here)

"That mass of men among whom the Word of God is purely preached and the sacraments administered."

That is the church according to reformed theology, John Calvin.

The church is that mass of men among whom the word of God is purely preached in the sacraments and administered. In other words if somebody is upfront and preaching from this Book, and what this book says and then distributes the sacraments, the bread and wine, this is the church of Jesus Christ.

Does that make it a church?

I go back to the Anabaptist view, A separated, disciplined Fellowship of saints, namely of all believing regenerated Christians, children of God, born from above by the Word and the Spirit.

You see there you have a changed people the other way you do not have changed people.

There is a drastic difference.

In the Anabaptist concept of the church you have Fellowship, it is the body, you have saints, people who actually are holy, that is the root of the word saint, believing, there is faith in there and works, regenerated, born again and in the other definition it is just a mass of men and it is the whole population in Calvin's mentality among whom the word is purely preached and the sacraments administered.

So when it comes down to is this; Is the Church of Jesus Christ an element in society, a changed regenerated element in society or is it co-extensive with society?

Is the church a body of believing saints or is it a regional body based on geographical location and civil government?

Those are two mutually exclusive concepts.

If the church is regional then all in the region are members regardless of their beliefs, actions, age or whatever.

If the church is confessional and demonstrated by works then small children are not included because they cannot confess faith, evildoers are not included because their works do not prove their faith.

What it comes down to is whether we believe in Christianity or Christendom?

Brother Henry used that word he said; People in Christendom don't see things like we do or don't experience what we experience.

Christendom technically in the old days was a state church set up but the New Testament church is the ecclesia, the called out ones, God calls, Come out of her my people, wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and I will receive you. **2 Corinthians 6:17.**

The New Testament church is a separated subset of society in the world but not of the world.

Whereas the Reformed view of the church state/union view is that if this is society why then this is the church, it is coextensive, if you are here in society you are in the church.

Well this concept of a pluralistic society with freedom of conscience was revolutionary to pre-Christian societies whether Jewish or Roman or European, they all counted on religion being the glue; both Jew and Roman counted on religion being the glue to hold society together.

Old Testament Jewish society was not a pluralistic nation in faith or inseparably entwined, Israel was the name of both the political and the religious entity, one religion, one state, every child born in political Israel joined religious Israel as an infant through the ritual of circumcision, you had to get them in right away, get them into the religion.

Well there is more to that, in the Old Testament there was faith there too but as a type of society it was a civil religious set up that is about what it was.

In the Reformation era both Catholics and Reformers built societies based upon this pre-Christian model of church and state united in a sacral society. If your ruler was Catholic you were a Catholic, if he was Lutheran you were a Lutheran, and when Catholics and Lutherans battled for your region you might change from Catholic to Lutheran back to Catholic, back to Lutheran several times as armies advanced and retreated.

Now one of the reasons the Reformers reached back into the Old Testament so much for their practices and doctrines was that they were building a pre-Christian society with a united church and state.

In the Old Testament circumcision brought babies into the state/religion of Israel, so the Reformers said that babies born in the State were also to be part of the church and so they said we will bring babies into the church by baptism which corresponds to circumcision in their view.

In such a society Jesus teaching of nonresistance is an impossible ideal, it doesn't make sense, I mean it's impractical, it must mean it is only for some people like just the monks or just the clergy or some future time maybe, it doesn't make sense.

And oath swearing likewise, the provision of oath swearing, you have to have it for a political religious society or any political society and so as the political and religious societies are one then you have that oath swearing, you cannot give it up and so the sermon on the Mount with the direct teachings and example of Jesus Christ were swept aside, they did not know what to do with them in a society where church and state were one, they just did not know what to do with them.

The Anabaptists had an answer, a radical answer.

And I use radical in its entomological meaning and that means getting to the root of it, it comes from radicalis or root of and they said get down to the root of the matter, up root that old idea of a unified church and state and build a New Testament church on New Testament principles and I think when we look at their answer you can see why both Reformers and Catholics feared the Anabaptists as revolutionaries and felt they must exterminate them.

And I think we can see also why they continually accused them of attempting to overthrow government.

And the Anabaptist said: We are not trying to overthrow governments, we are not political revolutionaries, we are respectful, we pray, we pay, we obey but we are going to build upon New Testament principles and let the chips fall where they will and if this means the world is turned upside down or right side up why so be it!

That was the Anabaptist view -we are building a New Testament church.

Now today when you say this in 2010 in America the Anabaptists ideals of freedom of conscience and of a voluntary church in a pluralistic society seems normal, it is the status quo but even today we would not need to travel very far before the old model makes itself felt again.

Not long after the birth of the Mennonite church in January 1525 the Anabaptist met to set forth in writing the New Testament principles guiding their movement and the result was the Schleitheim Confession of 1527 written by Michael Sattler and others, seven articles each directed toward the formation of a church based upon New Testament principles in each of those articles is a key position of the Anabaptists and I would just now like to follow with key position six here to follow the articles of the Schleitheim Confession.

6]. Key position six: Believers Baptism. The first article of the Schleitheim Confession.

To the Reformers baptism meant little, it was not very important, it was a secondary thing in their categorizing of ethics, ethical categorizing, it was something done to babies to bring them into the church.

To the Anabaptists baptism was very important, it was a believer's baptism, you have been washed and made new, whosoever believeth and is baptised shall be saved. It is for adults, not for babies because babies cannot believe they told Reformers. And Luther said: Oh yes, babies can believe, babies can have latent faith, it is there but you cannot see it, it comes out later.

How do you know it is there?

Well you just take my word for it, it is there.

Oh yes, Calvin said, babies have partial faith.

Well how do you know?

Well take my word for it.

Zwingli said, O well babies have parental faith, the parents have faith for the babies and this kind of thing.

And well the Anabaptist said: Show it to me in the New Testament.

And the New Testament said believers are to be baptized and that's really where it is, and this was very, very important to the Anabaptists, this was the rite by which they were brought into the visible body of Christ. That whole thing of visible and invisible is another discussion that we are not going to go into but this is very important to the Anabaptists and of course they insisted that infant baptism did not mean anything and therefore they were called rebaptisers, Anabaptists. We think if somebody calls me an Anabaptist I think, that's nice, I will take that mantle, I'll wear it, I'll be happy with that, keep my chin up but back then that was a term of disgust to be called Anabaptists, you were part of the rabble, part of the people that were not fit to walk the earth, were not fit to live at all.

So that was the first article of the Schleithem Confession: Believers' Baptism.

And that is how they defined themselves and interestingly enough that is the name their enemies gave to them – rebaptisers.

7]. Key position number seven and this is the second article of the Schleithem confession was Church Discipline – called The Ban or Excommunication.

And this is based largely on Matthew 18, the binding and the loosing, and the Anabaptist said it is necessary to the New Testament church and you see it in the New Testament that it is not just Matthew 18, it is first Corinthians 5 and there are references in various places in the epistles that make it clear that the church is a disciplined body, a disciplined body and that exercise of discipline is necessary for the purity of the church.

Now the Reformers and the Catholics just did not see how to exercise church discipline in a sacral society because to put a member out of the church you had to put him out of society because the church and society were co-extensive.

How do you put a person out of society? Well you stick them in jail. That was one of the forces of church discipline or you exile him, you tell him he must leave this society or you take his head off or you burn him or something like that, that's church discipline under a sacral system.

We today of course in America have that kind of church discipline but very few churches practice New Testament church discipline as the second article of the Schleithem confession directs or as the New Testament teaches it and the Anabaptists practiced it and we should not be intimidated because not many do, we should keep on doing it because it is scriptural, it is Bible, it fits into our heritage and it is very important to have a pure church of Jesus Christ.

8]. Key position eight, this is the third article of the Schleithem confession, Breaking of Bread in close communion.

They said it like this: All who wish to break bread together must beforehand be united into one body of Christ by baptism, the congregation, by baptism.

And to the Anabaptists you see the communion was a symbolic event of brotherhood, they made a highlight of the symbolism of Christ's death but they also made much of the symbolism in first Corinthians 10 where the grain was ground to make the loaf and we are one loaf and it symbolizes brotherhood, and that is a very Anabaptist concept.

Most churches don't make much of that as I understand it, certainly the Reformers and Catholics would not have.

The Catholics and Reformers by way of contrast said communion or mass, whatever they call it, is a sacrament, it is a means of bringing grace to the unconverted unwashed masses of Christendom and thus they had all kinds of arguments about how this was to be done and to bring grace to the masses of these people that would somehow get into heaven and some said, the Catholics said, that when the priest elevates the host and pronounces the proper words the host or the bread is actually changed into the literal body of Jesus Christ and so they are actually partaking of Jesus Christ literally and Jesus said: If you take my body that is going to bring life to you.

And so this is the way to bring life to the unconverted masses.

Luther said, well he believed that grace came through sacraments too but transubstantiation was a little too hard for him and so he said, Well maybe

the priest isn't really changing it, he is not really changing it but the presence of Christ is everywhere and so it is in the bread too.

That is con-substantiation.

And I think if you take that logically you can take that to the turkey dinner too for that matter but I don't really see how that fits.

But one interesting point that I came across in "The Reformers and Their Stepchildren" a number of years ago was that as the priest elevates the host he said the words in Latin and the common people did not understand Latin and to then it sounded like "hocus-pocus" which you've heard I'm sure, it is magic going on here, magic going on. They did not really understand it.

Well the arguments about transubstantiation and con-substantiation and all that the Anabaptists just swept that aside, they didn't even discuss it in their Confession, didn't even talk about it because what was important to them was that we are brethren in close communion, the communion table is limited to such brethren, we exercise Matthew 18 to keep the body pure so that we can be one loaf and then we can, you come together as brethren, commemorating the work of Jesus Christ on the behalf of the body and that is what communion meant to them and it was not all this about grace and making people pure and all that kind of thing.

And very few churches, again, very few churches practices close communion in this Anabaptist New Testament sense where you bind and you loose, where you keep the body pure and you have counsel services and use Matthew 18 to solve and resolve problems and you keep together so you can have one loaf and then you sit down and you take the elements in representation and commemoration of what Jesus Christ did for us.

That is the New Testament attitude about the breaking of bread in close communion and it is a very important Anabaptist position and it is that important to us today too.

And it is amazing in our area, a church, a Beachy church, I heard this from a Protestant and I believe it is true, went into prison and took communion with the prisoners on a regular basis and not people who were in their

group but with whoever wanted to participate, whoever came out for the experience.

That is a very, very un-Anabaptist action, very un-Anabaptist, they are very, very far from their roots there and don't know it.

9]. Key position number nine: in the Schleithem confession called Separation from the Abomination. Separation from evil or the world and unscriptural churches.

The Anabaptists were not ecumenical relativists who Christianized their opponents, they were absolutists who denounced evil and called for separation and withdrawal.

The Reformers wanted the Anabaptist to join and they said, Love, love, love, are you forgetting love?

Zwingli said: Whether or not you have the Scriptures on your side these things should be decided by love!

Does that sound familiar? I think so.

And the Anabaptists were not against love but they were not going to use love as an excuse to compromise with wrongdoing and wrong doctrine and this is a very necessary understanding for us in our relativistic, pluralistic religious America where doctrine no longer counts and tolerance is the highest virtue.

And I think it even touches us a little sometimes when people are more afraid, more afraid of saying: Well this is an un-Christian practice or an un-Christian idea then they are Christianizing whoever wants the name.

That touches us just a little bit and I don't think we should do either one, I think we should leave the judgment of those without in the hands of God as first Corinthians 5 instructs us to do but by all means let's not start this inclusive relativistic idea of embracing whoever calls themselves a Christian. That is not biblical and it is not Anabaptist either.

10]. Key Anabaptist position number 10 is on church leadership. In the Schleithem Confession called Pastors in the Church.

The Anabaptists, if you read the Schleithem confession, it is clear that they did not believe in a professional leadership, it was non-professional leadership – an unpaid and unsalaried leadership.

The Reformers their church leaders worked hand in glove with civil rulers, and they received a pay for doing it, they were either trained professionals or else put into a professional position, today they are mostly trained professionals and today of course some of the Anabaptists are taking the reformed approach by having professional leaders, professional clergy.

But the Anabaptist approach was to say, and you can see it in their confession way back from 1527, is what is important is that leaders meet Bible qualifications, that leaders meet the Bible qualifications, that is the important thing, not how educated they are, not that they are authorized by the church or authorized by the state, not that they stand in some apostolic succession or something like that but that they meet the qualifications of the New Testament.

Among the Catholics and the Reformers many of the clergy were admittedly wicked men, not all, but many were, even a man like Zwingli had a concubine. And how did they deal with that? I mean they knew, I said they were admittedly wicked men, and I mean the Reformers admitted it, it is not that other people accused them of it and they denied, no, they admitted it.

How did they defend that?

Well Luther said something like this; Even if Judas and Caiaphas or Pilate served the sacraments it makes no difference, they still make the participants holy, it does not matter who does the serving that makes a difference, it doesn't matter who does the preaching if what is true is preached, it makes no difference who does it.

That is confusion brethren, that is error, it is certainly not Scripture, it is certainly not New Testament.

And you know I think we see it today that the Catholic Church can hardly take action against its leaders that are doing immoral things, they hardly can do it, it is part of the old attitude.

But in the New Testament and to the Anabaptists the spiritual qualifications of the leader are central and they are absolutely necessary and we

must keep that true too, I mean that is the way it has to be, and anyone of us here, and most of us are ministers, and we could all be defrocked by falling into sin. That's just the way it is, we have to understand that. That's Anabaptism, that's New Testament Scripture.

11]. Key Anabaptist position number 11 which is article 6 in the Schleitheim confession simply called The Sword. Nonresistance and separation of church and state, non-participation in civil government.

There are quite a few things together there.

They don't exactly say it like this, they mention nonresistance a little bit in one of the early articles and here the idea behind a lot of the teaching in this article is that you cannot be non-resistant and be a magistrate and so forth, but this matter of nonresistance and not serving in civil government as a magistrate or as a judge I think there is no place in the New Testament that it says you cannot serve in civil government precisely but that is the assumption, that is the assumption.

And when you look at the teachings of Christ on nonresistance you say, Well how could you ever practice nonresistance in a position of civil authority?

And that's right, that's an Anabaptist idea and it has New Testament authority behind it.

Well to the Roman Catholics and the Reformers nonresistance, non-participation in civil government, it did not make sense in a sacral society where the church and state were united, it did not make sense.

And they said: Well, you remember Peter said when Jesus asked for swords Peter said: Here are two. And Jesus said it's enough. Luke 22:38.

And they said that one was the sword of the spirit, that belonged to the clergy, and the other sword of steel and that belongs to the state, you see it is two swords and that is what you are supposed to have.

But you know Luther said: Well the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' teaching on nonresistance and loving your enemies and so forth that applies in the church but not in the state, but if the church and state are co-extensive how can it be applied in one and not the other?

It sets up a tremendous tension.

A tension felt today because he also said: A Christian must function in both realms

Well obviously if the realms are so co-extensive you have too and so what goes?

Does the Sermon on the Mount go or does the participation in civil government go?

Well we know with Luther what went and it was the Sermon on the Mount.

It sets up a tremendous tension and it is a tension that is felt today by those who attempt to follow the Sermon on the Mount sincerely and also feel responsible to serve in the military and serve as judges and magistrates, it is just very uncomfortable.

It sets up a tension in the soul because you are trying to keep a foot in two different kingdoms they do not belong together and it is an impossible span, it is a tremendous stretch.

Now to the Anabaptists there are two kingdoms, there is the kingdom of Christ and the Church and there is the kingdom of the world, the state.

And we belong to the Church and we do not serve the state but we serve Christ and the tension is resolved when you give up Luther's idea of functioning in both realms and say; I will function only in the Church. And the church and state are separated and the tension is dissolved but the confusion persists in most churches today.

12]. Key position number 12, non-swearing of oaths. This is also from the Schleithem Confession, article 7, The Oath.

Oaths are necessary to politics for legal proceedings and oaths for fealty or loyalty. In Reformation days the city of Strasbourg had an institution known as the Day of the Oath. On this day all the citizens in this city swore an oath of allegiance to the state in front of the cathedral and that oath included a willingness to support the State in time of war.

And it is interesting again to see that attempt to be in both realms, to mix politics and religion, it was an oath of allegiance to the state sworn in front of the cathedral, you see there it is again and today the mixture persists.

You put your hand on the Bible to swear political or judicial oaths, you see again that mixture and yet the New Testament is clear about oath swearing, Jesus said: Swear not at all, Matthew 5:34.

And James said above all things brethren swear not, above all things! James 5:12.

And the Anabaptist stayed by the New Testament, they said oaths are not needed for a truthful people, our allegiance is to Christ.

But of course the Reformers did know what to do with this prohibition of swearing oaths in a sacral society, you have to have them and so what goes? The Sermon on the Mount goes you see again.

And they use oath swearing, some persecutors use oath swearing as an easy and almost infallible litmus test for identifying Anabaptists, just get them to swear an oath, see if they will do it and if they don't do it you will know where they belong. Get them out of society.

13]. Key position number 13, Brotherhood Assistance.

And that last one, this oath swearing was the last one in the Schleithem confession but I'm just going to mention two more quickly and brotherhood assistance that very much was a key position of the Anabaptists.

The Hutterites made the thing legal this thing of sharing of property, the Anabaptists generally believed in private property but not private ownership exactly, I can't quite think out how to say that, they believed in private ownership but they did not believe that they had any rights at all to withhold property from those that had needs, no right to do that, nobody could take property from another but the one who withheld property from the needy was immoral.

That is an Anabaptist concept and they were stronger on that than what we are I would say.

And the world looks at that concept today, things like barn raisings and mutual aid, and it marvels, it marvels.

And it is a very beautiful and powerful witness when you have that kind of witness of action then the witness of words means something, words don't mean much unless there is that kind of action behind them.

But anyway we call that brotherhood assistance or mutual aid as a key position.

14]. And then last key position number 14, Evangelism.

I figured I was going to be about done so I kept these very brief but the Reformers said that the great commission was fulfilled by the Apostles, that is their official position.

The Anabaptists said, No, no, no, the great commission remains in effect and it is for all believers in Jesus Christ and they went forth with the gospel eager, energetic and effective evangelists, many gave their lives in missionary endeavour and they had the concept that you are either a missionary or you are a mission field.

Of course the Reformers said: Well, if this is Christendom and if everybody in this state is in the church too whatever is the point of witnessing?

Well yes, but the Anabaptists said no, oh no, no, the church is a called out subset and there are people all around us that need the message of Jesus Christ and they went out and gave that message.

Evangelism, there is a lot that can be said on Anabaptist evangelism.

In conclusion.

With the Catholics if I think about it I'm not sure this is really the last word but if I think about Catholics the keywords that come to my mind are ritual and authority.

When I think about Protestants the keywords are grace and theology.

When we think about the Pietists, the keyword is emotion.

When I think of Anabaptists maybe more than any other the keyword is discipleship.

And while the Catholics build their cathedrals, their institutions, and the Protestants theorise and systematize their theology and the Pietists enjoy their ecstasies the Anabaptists humbly take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ.

And there is some truth and value in all these emphasis but the desperately needed, mostly neglected message and rejected message is that of discipleship of Jesus Christ.

And may we be faithful to give that message.



WISE AND PRUDENT, OR HUMBLE?

When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples to heal and to preach the gospel of His kingdom, they returned and reported with joy that even the devils were subject to them through His name. Jesus told them they shouldn't rejoice in the fact that spirits were subject to them, "but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Jesus then made a profound statement, which is the conviction of this writing. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight" Luke 10:21.

What was the source of Jesus' rejoicing?

Hardly that "these things" were hid from the wise and prudent. The seventy had just returned from their mission and were rejoicing in the gospel Christ had come to proclaim. It must have given Jesus great joy to see how they had caught the vision and how "these things" pertaining to the new, or soon to be established, kingdom were revealed to them.

Jesus had just pronounced woes upon some of the cities of the Jews because they had not accepted Him. The "wise and prudent," self-righteous scribes and Pharisees couldn't understand the plan of salvation, but these lowly disciples, "ignorant and unlearned," were the type God could use and to whom He chose to reveal these truths. Another time when Christ was teaching the people, it was said that the common people heard Him gladly. When John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to Jesus to see if He was the One who should come or if they should look for another, in the answer given was the statement, "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

To be poor, or just a commoner, is not the popular thing in the world today, although there are many around the world that fit into that status. Am I willing to be a stranger and a pilgrim in North America or anywhere else in the world for that matter?

We hear statements like, "We need more than a basic elementary education." The technology that is bursting around us wants to press in; also the

desire to take advantage of the affluence of our day is a constant temptation. Will the Church that Jesus established continue to be of those to whom God reveals "these things"? "Babes" would be those who are teachable, humble, and child-like, trusting their all to Christ to lead them through the struggles of life.

Paul told the Corinthians that "the world by wisdom knew not God" 1 Corinthians 1:21. The wiser men become in the wisdom of this world, the less they understand true godly wisdom and how God works in the hearts of His children.

The trend is to have better jobs, bigger farms and equipment, and to use the latest technology to be more efficient and profitable. All this has a tendency to make one feel more self-sufficient and wiser in his or her own eyes. Paul told the Romans in chapter 12, verse 16, "Be not wise in your own conceits," or thoughts. In the same verse, he wrote, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." To condescend is to descend to a lower level, also to be content with the lesser and simpler things of life.

May we be content to be the quiet of the land and maintain the vision of our founding fathers one of whom wrote: *Quote:* "The church of God has for so many hundreds of years not had high schools, or higher education, and yet has been able to overcome the world better than churches that do have such schools. We cannot believe that a church can remain the church of God when it conducts higher schools, for experience has taught us that it must first become selfish and proud before it seeks for such a worldly dress to adorn its body, and the pen, and the tongue so gloriously." *End quote.* Where a spirit desiring high schools (or higher education) arises in a church that was formerly opposed to this, there a deep fall has occurred, because she is beginning to seek for high things.

To those who have convictions for a special work that requires more education God can, and will, grant grace that they won't become high-minded.

Again, referring to the apostle Paul, in Philippians 3, he describes his lineage and former position and states that he could have confidence in the

flesh. But in verse 7, we read, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." And in verse 8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ!"

If we can maintain this vision and be the humble servants of our Lord, walking in lowliness of mind as children of God, then we will continue to be those to whom these spiritual truths are revealed.

Brother Franklin.



A Ballast for My Soul

Life is like a stormy sea
That tosses to and fro,
But God's Word will ever be
A ballast for my soul.
By its truth I'll be held fast
Till I reach heaven's shore
Where I will be home at last
And sail life's sea no more!

—*Perry Boardman*

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Are the sons and daughters of God lacking direction in making decisions pertaining to everyday living? Does our course of action portray Christ to a watching world? As we look back over the decisions of a day, week, or longer, do we feel the sanction of God on our activities? Would the unbelievers be led to think of God as they observe our walk in this present world?

If they know anything of the life Jesus lived in the flesh, would they think we are His disciples? Could there be some confusion in the mind of an observing world as perhaps our outward appearance impresses them as godly but our activity or possessions indicate a desire for the same things they indulge in to satisfy the unrest in their lives? Let us be encouraged to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called," so the misled, storm-tossed voyager on the sea of life can use us as a beacon to make a safe landing on heaven's shore. If we can't be used in this capacity, we cannot truthfully say we're Christians. As Christ showed His Father to the world, so will the followers of Christ (Christians) show Jesus to the world.

In the heart of every true believer, there is a desire to be "labourers together with God" 1 Corinthians 3:9.

Considering this important work, we should know if we are helping or hindering. The basis of this knowledge is our association with God through His Word, together with the voice of the Holy Ghost. This is supported by reading Acts 4:13, "And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." The apostles walked and talked with Jesus (the Word) every day if at all possible. We have no doubt that their desire to be with Him was their motivation. Do we possess a desire for the Word of God (the Bible)? Is it as alive as when we were first forgiven? We cannot expect to portray Jesus in our daily lives, at home or abroad, without reading the record of His life and the added instructions of writers moved by the Holy Ghost.

We cannot be so involved with "cares of this world" that we have little time to think on His name, Malachi 3:16 and still expect to walk as He walked! 1 John 2:6. Suppose the disciples would have been casual in their

association with Jesus. Some days it may not have been convenient to be with Him. Maybe some days they got up too late, and with a few chores around home involving every day living, they just didn't get around to seeing or hearing Him for a day or so. When they did finally go, because of duty, it was late, they were tired and unable to fully absorb His gracious words. Suppose that one day they went to town for a few hours to purchase needed supplies. While there, they allowed themselves to play a game or two, indulge in reading material that would subtract from their desire to be with Jesus. In light of these suppositions, none of us would expect the disciples to be effective witnesses of the Truth, leading others to desire the fellowship of God (Jesus). The people of the "world" would have surely thought of them as hypocrites and would have despised their Jesus as someone without saving and keeping power. Would they have been "labourers together with God"? Can we be Christians if we lack diligence in associating with Jesus, the Word?

If we find a lack of desire, let us not be discouraged, but rather come to God in humble prayer, admit our neglect, beg for mercy, and "he will abundantly pardon" Isaiah 55:7. Then our lives will be complete again, and peace will reign. If you feel a stir in your heart for renewal "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh" Hebrews 12:25.

Because if we do have those times of discouragement and failure in our lives then we are able to call on the Lord and like the psalmist say: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me: Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall save me" Psalm 138:7, and we can seek the face of God afresh and beseech Him not just personally but also for all His people in the words of Psalm 85:6: ⁶Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

We can do this knowing that in Christ Jesus our Lord we can have boldness and access with confidence by the faith the promises and provisions God has for those whom He calls His sons and daughters. (Ephesians 3:11-12, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)



ADD TO YOUR LIFE

2 Peter 1:5-11

With diligence have *faith* in God;
Believe His Word each hour.
Add *virtue*, too, with purity;
Trust God's enabling power.

Next, *knowledge* based on righteousness
Add to your life each day;
And *temperance* we all should seek
In what we do and say.

Have *patience*--sweet submissive peace
When trials tempt us sore;
Add *godliness* with deep desire
To follow Jesus more.

Then *kindness* to each brother show
In humble, loving care;
And don't neglect--add *charity*
With fervent, grateful prayer.

For if these things be in your life,
Abundant fruit we'll see;
An entrance shall be opened wide
To heaven eternally.

M. J. R.

(The Christian Example February 16, 1986)

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: shimara2@iprimus.com.au

Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org